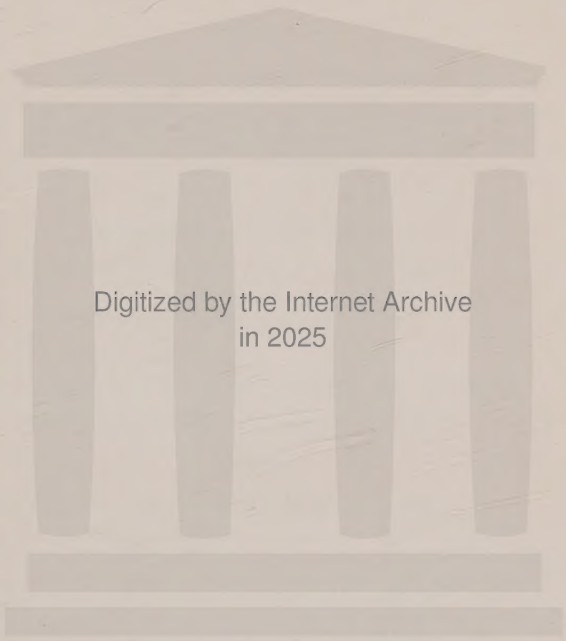


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/treatiseonknowle0002vari

A TREATISE

ON

THE KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE

OF

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

FATHER SAINT-JURE, S. J.,

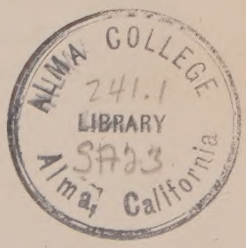
WITH AN ORIGINAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR.

BY A MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF MERCY,

AUTHORESS OF THE LIFE OF CATHERINE M'AULEY, ETC.

"If any one love not the Lord Jesus let him be Anathema."—1 Cor. 18.

PERMISSU SUPERIORUM.



VOLUME II.

NEW YORK:
P. O'SHEA, 27 BARCLAY STREET.
1870.

44136

Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1869, by
P. O'SHEA,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, for the Southern District of New York.

PARISH LIBRARY
SAN JOSE
Alma Colleges
LIBRARY
California
ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE SECOND VOLUME OF THE KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,

(INCLUDING VOLS. 3 AND 4 OF THE ORIGINAL.)

It was intended that the second volume of the English version of this work should contain the third, fourth and fifth books of the original, but the Publisher has decided to include the third and part of the fourth book in a second volume, and issue half of the fourth and fifth books as a third.

Circumstances independent of the Translator have delayed to this late date the publication of the second volume, and some apology is due to friends interested in the work, in Ireland and England as well as in the United States, for a delay in behalf of which nothing can be said save that it was all but unavoidable. It is hoped however, that the third and last volume will be ready early in the ensuing year.

CONVENT OF MERCY,
New Orleans, La.
FEAST OF ALL SAINTS, 1869.

CONTENTS OF VOLUME II.

CONTINUATION OF BOOK THIRD.

CHAPTER XI.

PAGE.

Of the Sacrifice of the Mass.—I. All nations had Sacrifices.—II. The Sacrifice of the Mass is essentially the same as the Sacrifice of the Cross.—III. Accidental differences which distinguish them.—IV. The Sacrifice of the Mass as the most august mystery, and the offering most agreeable to God.—V. The action most glorious to our Lord.—VI. The most profitable to the Church 19

Sec. 1. Continuation.—I. Ends of its institution.—II. It is a Sacrifice of the Holocaust.—III. Of propitiation.—IV. Of thanksgiving.—V. Of impetration..... 23

Sec. 2. Consequences which Priests ought to draw from this doctrine. —I. They are obliged to lead a holy life.—II. Of saying Mass.—III. With great devotion..... 30

Sec. 3. Manner of hearing Mass well.—I. Signification of the chief parts of the Mass.—II. All the faithful offer Mass in the person of the Priest.—III. Manner of hearing Mass.—Of Spiritual Communion, 36

CHAPTER XII.

Of Visiting the Blessed Sacrament.—I. Why Our Lord is in the Blessed Sacrament.—II. It is just to visit Him.—III. It is sweet to visit Him.—IV. It is useful to visit Him..... 43

Sec. 1. Manner of visiting the Holy Sacrament.—I. Divers intentions which we may propose to ourselves in visiting the Blessed Sacrament.—II. To praise Him.—III. In thanksgiving.—IV. To expose to Him our wants.—V. To enjoy His presence.—VI. Other ends.... 50

Sec. 2. Conclusion.—I. We ought to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.—II. Examples of the Saints..... 54

CHAPTER XIII.

Divine Love makes us love all that refers to God.—I. All.—II. His images.—III. His feasts.—IV. His Holy Name 61

Sec. 1. Continuation.—I. His words.—II. His Holy Mother.—III. All the Saints..... 67

CHAPTER XIV.

PAGE.

Of charity to our neighbor. Its excellence.—I. It takes its source in the love of God.—II. Four manners of loving the neighbor.—III. Four manners of loving the commandment of Our Lord.—IV. It is the mark of a Christian.—V. The mark of predestination..... 71

Sec. 1. The neighbor we ought to love.—I. We ought to love all men. —II. Particularly Christians.—III. We ought to love sinners..... 79

Sec. 2. We ought to love our enemies.—I. We are formally commanded to do so.—II. This precept is peculiar to Christians.—III. It is the highest degree of charity.—IV. It is a very noble thing..... 83

Sec. 3. Continuation. Examples.—I. Example of God.—II. of Jesus Christ.—III. Of the Saints, men and women..... 87

Sec. 4. Advice touching injuries and enemies.—I. We should not be so sensible to injuries.—II. We must pardon them.—III. Resolutions. —IV. Words of St. Austin..... 94

Sec. 5. How we ought to love our neighbor.—I. We ought to love our neighbor in effect.—II. As ourselves.—III. As Our Lord has loved us..... 100

Sec. 6. Duties of Charity. Envy.—I. Extent of the duties of charity. II. Definition of envy.—III. This sin directly combats charity.—IV. Resolutions..... 106

Sec. 7. Of Rash Judgments.—I. Different degrees of rash judgment.— II. We should never judge.—III. Our judgments are always uncertain..... 111

Sec. 8. Of words which wound charity.—I. Calumny.—II. How committed.—III. We should speak well of our neighbor and excuse his faults.—IV. Of sharp words.—V. Of quarrels..... 119

Sec. 9. Of works of charity.—I. Charity inclines us to do good to our neighbor.—II. Divers works of charity.—III. Practice of Father Faber..... 125

Sec. 10. Another effect of charity. Union and concord.—I. Happiness of union.—II. It is one of the chief effects of charity. -III. It ought in some manner resemble the union of the Three Divine Persons... 132

Sec. 11. Conclusion.—I. Resolutions.—II. Means to preserve union.— III. Conclusion..... 136

Sec. 12. Another effect of charity. To support the defects of our neighbors.—I. There is no one free from defects.—II. We must mutually support each other.—III. The example of Our Lord excites us to this.—IV. This is the model God gives us..... 141

Sec. 13. Another effect of charity. Zeal for the salvation of souls.—I. Excellence of zeal.—II. The profit it procures.—III. It is one of the greatest effects of the love of God.—IV. Our Lord gives this zeal to loving souls.—V. Examples..... 147

Sec. 14. Continuation.—I. Means of preaching zeal.—II. All can practise it..... 155

Sec. 15. Virtues necessary for those who labor for the salvation of souls.—I. Several virtues are necessary.—II. A great love for sinners.—III. We ought to love them for themselves.—IV. Examples.. 158

Sec. 16. Continuation.—I. Love of Jesus Christ for sinners.—II. Vision of Carpus..... 163

Sec. 17. Conclusion.—I. We must consider the soul not the body.—II. Beauty of the soul..... 167

PAGE.

SEC. 18. Another virtue necessary for an apostolic man. Prudence which ought to regulate zeal.—I. Prudence is necessary.—II. He must not forget himself.—III. His zeal will be the more efficacious for this.—IV. He must labor only in what belongs to his charge.—V. He must follow the direction of his superior.—VI. Security which prudence gives zeal 171

SEC. 19. Another virtue necessary for an apostolic man. The practice of prayer.—I. Prayer unites man to God.—II. Prayer teaches him how to guide souls.—III. It is a means to procure the salvation of souls 180

SEC. 20. Another virtue necessary for an apostolic man.—I. Mortification.—II. Patience 185

SEC. 21. Another virtue necessary for an apostolic man. Humility.—I. Reasons drawn from the side of God.—II. From the apostolic man.—III. From utility to our neighbor.—IV. Conclusion 194

SEC. 22. Other virtues necessary for an apostolic man.—I. Poverty.—II. Contempt of earthly things.—III. Conformity to the will of God.—IV. Diffidence in self and confidence in God 204

SEC. 23. Advice to superiors.—I. How difficult it is to govern men.—II. We must obey if God imposes this task on us 210

SEC. 24. Continuation.—I. Things necessary to a Superior: an exemplary life.—II. The practice of prayer.—III. He ought to lead his subjects by divine motives.—IV. He ought to be humble.—V. Without meanness.—VI. He ought to be sweet and patient.—VII. Subjects ought to bear with the defects of Superiors 217

SEC. 25. Of the correction of faults.—I. All Christians are bound by this precept.—II. Above all Superiors.—III. The Superior ought to be gentle rather than severe 232

SEC. 26. Continuation.—I. The Superior should bear the faults of his subjects with patience.—II. To reprehend them without anger.—III. With courage 239

SEC. 27. Models of good government.—I. St. Ignatius.—II. St. Honoratus.—III. St. Theodosius.—IV. St. Nicetas.—V. God 248

SEC. 28. Advice to preachers.—I. A good life.—II. Prayer.—III. Humility.—IV. Zeal and courage.—V. Science 254

SEC. 29. Advice to Confessors.—I. Excellence of this ministry.—II. Its merits.—III. The confessor should esteem and love it.—IV. What the confessor ought to do before, during and after confessing.—V. Counsel of Father Balthasar Alvarez 277

SEC. 30. Of conversation.—I. Importance of conversation.—II. Qualities requisite for conversing well 284

SEC. 31. Conversation should be sweet.—I. It ought to be meek.—II. Modest and humble.—III. Reasonably gay 287

SEC. 32. Conversation ought to be prudent.—I. It ought to be prudent.—II. Nothing against virtue should be introduced.—III. It should be suitable to the condition of him who converses.—IV. And of those to whom he speaks.—V. We must speak at the proper time.—VI. Conversations ought not to be too long 294

SEC. 33. Conversation ought to be useful 301

PAGE.

SEC. 34. Model of a conversation perfect in all things, on which we ought to form ours.—I. The conversation of Our Lord.—II. It was very sweet.—III. Very prudent.—IV. Very useful..... 305

SEC. 35. Of Modesty.—I. Essence of modesty.—II. Two species of modesty.—III. Its effects. It composes the countenance.—IV. The words.—V. The walk and gestures..... 310

SEC. 36. Continuation.—I. The excellence of modesty should incline us to practise it.—II. The interest of our neighbor..... 315

CHAPTER XV.

The love of Our Lord makes the loving soul advance in virtue.—I. Those who love advance in virtue.—II. Because they are animated by an active spirit.—III. Because they know the importance of salvation.—IV. Because they know they have only this life for labor.—V. Because if they advance not, they recede..... 323

SEC. 1. Important advice concerning the acquisition of virtues.—I. Ardent desires.—II. Courage.—III. Our virtue should be independent of exterior things.—IV. It ought to tend to great and solid sanctity.—V. Order to be observed..... 328

SEC. 2. All can acquire a high degree of perfection by co-operating with grace.—I. Because God ardently desires to communicate Himself to us.—II. According to our dispositions.—III. Few co-operate with the graces of God..... 340

SEC. 3. Continuation.—I. Graces are unequally bestowed.—II. God gives every one sufficient grace to become very perfect.—III. Words of St. Bernard..... 346

SEC. 4. Signs of advancement in virtue.—I. Effects.—II. Victory over the contrary vice.—III. Facility in the practice of virtue..... 351

CHAPTER XVI.

The love of God makes us avoid venial sin.—I. Difference between mortal and venial sin.—II. Venial sin offends God.—III. Sullies the soul.—IV. Hinders advancement in perfection..... 357

SEC. 1. Other effects of venial sin.—I. It closes the entrance to actual graces.—II. Actual grace urges us to do good.—III. It protects us from evil.—IV. It directs us in the ways of salvation.—V. Sin deprives us of these three advantages.—VI. Mortal sin.—VII. Venial sin..... 362

SEC. 2. Other effects of venial sin.—I. It disposes to mortal sin by taking from the soul all that could keep it off.—II. By giving entrance to all that can incline to mortal sin.—III. We must fear the number of our venial sins.—IV. Venial sin causes strange evils..... 369

SEC. 3. Conclusion.—I. Resolutions.—II. Examples.—III. The love of Our Lord excites us to fly venial sin.—IV. Words of St. Bernard.—V. Means of obtaining pardon of venial sins..... 375

SEC. 4. Of the correction of faults and vices.—I. The knowledge of self.—II. Means of attaining it.—III. Difference between vices, sins, imperfections.—IV. We must attack the ruling passion.—V. Means of rooting out a vice.—VI. What we must do when we have overcome a fault..... 380

BOOK FOURTH.

EFFECTS OF DIVINE LOVE.

CHAPTER XVII.

PAGE.

The love of Our Lord excites us to perform our ordinary actions well. —I. We should perform our ordinary actions well.—II. Through love of Our Lord.—III. In this consists perfection.—IV. Excellence of a good action.—V. Its value.—VI. Other advantages.—VII. Resolutions 389

SEC. 1. We should strive to perform well even our least actions.—I. We must perform our least actions well.—II. Resolution 398

SEC. 2. Conditions necessary to a good action.—I. It must be performed through a motive of virtue.—II. Charity must in some manner enter it.—III. Excellent means of rendering our actions good 402

SEC. 3. Particular manner of performing our actions well.—I. The devil attacks us.—II. Before the action.—III. Remedies.—IV. During the action.—V. Remedies against vanity.—VI. Remissness.—VII. Cooling of Fervor.—VIII. Impatience.—IX. After the action.—X. Remedies. The glory of them must be referred to God.—XI. Not to seek praise.—XII. Not to yield to tepidity 409

CHAPTER XVIII.

Of the good intentions. Its importance 425

SEC. 1. Words and histories taken from Scripture.—I. Parable of the Leaven.—II. Workmen of the vineyard.—III. The woman afflicted with disease.—IV. The widow's mite 429

SEC. 2. The good intentions we should have in our actions.—I. Earthly intentions.—II. Heavenly intentions.—III. Divine intention.—IV. These are the most just.—V. The most pleasing and glorious to God.—VI. The most perfect 433

SEC. 3. Explanation of what is understood by divine intentions.—I. In what they consist.—II. What are the most perfect 439

SEC. 4. Another good intention; we must unite our actions with those of Jesus Christ.—I. In an actual manner.—II. Practice 443

SEC. 5. Conclusion of the two preceding chapters.—I. Let us do our actions well.—II. All can do it.—III. We must imitate three models: God.—IV. Our Lord.—V. The holy Virgin 448

CHAPTER XIX.

Of the observance of rules.—I. We must keep the rules through love. II. For our own perfection.—III. In order to avoid disedification ... 453

SEC. 1. Answer to objection.—I. First objection: The rules do not bind under pain of sin.—II. Second objection: Unimportant point.—III. Third objection: They are good for novices.—IV. The ancients are more bound to them 458

PAGE.

SEC. 2. Conclusion.—I. We must observe the rules.—II. Even the least.—III. We must excite others to observe them.—IV. Against dispensations..... 466

CHAPTER XX.

The love of Our Lord makes us practice faith well.—I. Essence of faith.—II. Formal and material object of faith..... 472

SEC. 1. Qualities of faith.—I. It ought to be firm.—II.—Simple.—III. Foundations of firmness and simplicity.—IV. It ought to be efficacious.—V. Naked..... 475

SEC. 2. Of the practice of faith.—I. What must be done to make a perfect act of faith.—II. On what it ought to be made.—III. Other manners.—IV. Above all it should be effective..... 488

SEC. 3. Conclusion.—I. Excellence of faith.—II. Its utility.—III. Its light.—IV. Its sweetness.—V. The love of Our Lord ought to make us practise them.—VI. Temptations against faith.—VII. Remedies. 498

CHAPTER XXI.

Divine Love makes us practise hope.—I. It is a very sweet virtue.—II. Its nature.—III. It ought to be unshaken.—IV. To despise human succor.—V. It rejoices when they fail.—VI. Examples.—VII. Means of attaining this degree..... 506

SEC. 1. Object of hope.—I. Our corporal wants.—II. Our defects.—III The pardon of our sins.—IV. Our predestination..... 513

SEC. 2. Practice of hope.—I. Manner of practising hope.—II. In what circumstances it ought to be practised..... 521

SEC. 3. Conclusion.—I. Reasons which should excite us to practise hope.—II. Our weakness.—III. Merit of hope.—IV. It fills the soul with security and joy.—V. It gives strength.—VI. It obtains all from God.—VII. It procures Him great glory..... 527

CHAPTER XXII.

The love of Our Lord excites us to humility.—I. What humility is.—II. Division of humility.—III. Means of knowing it well.—IV. What we have from God and what from ourselves.—V. Consequences..... 535

SEC. 1. Effects of humility with reference to God.—I. Effects of humility.—II. With reference to God..... 541

SEC. 2. Effects of humility with respect to ourselves.—I. Difference in self.—II. Flight of praise.—III. The humble man speaks little.—IV. He always chooses the lowest place..... 546

SEC. 3. Effects with reference to the neighbors.—I. The humble man fulfils perfectly all the duties of charity.—II. He puts himself beneath all.—III. Why?—IV. Even beneath sinners.—V. Conclusion.. 551

SEC. 4. We must fly vanity. Manner of conducting ourselves in our good works.—I. Vanity is greatly to be feared.—II. Why?—III. Man cannot glorify himself before the action.—IV. Nor during the action.—V. Nor after the action.—VI. We should compare our actions with those of the Saints..... 553

PAGE.

Sec. 5. Continuation.—I. Our good works are more God's than ours. II. To Him then we should refer the glory of them.—III. Acts to be produced towards God.—IV. Towards our neighbor.—V. Towards ourselves 567

Sec. 6. Manner of comporting ourselves when we fall into any fault.—I. We must draw profit from our faults.—II. How to consider them before God.—III. In ourselves.—IV. Towards our neighbor.—V. Reasons to induce us to take correction well.—VI. How we should receive correction..... 575

Sec. 7. Of the practice of humility.—I. Divers ways of practising humility.—II. All should perform acts of humility..... 588

Sec. 8. First motive of humility. Self knowledge.—I. Importance of this knowledge.—II. Means of acquiring it. Consideration.—III. Our faults and miseries.—IV. Supernatural light.—V. Prayer..... 594

Sec. 9. Second motive of humility. The necessity of grace.—I. Without grace we can do nothing for heaven.—II. Nor practise virtue.—III. Grace is necessary even to the most holy.—IV. And always.—V. Conclusion..... 599

Sec. 10. Third motive. Excellence of humility.—I. Humility is the foundation of the spiritual life.—II. The guardian of virtues.—III. The mark of predestination.—IV. It disposes us to receive grace.—V. It enlightens the understanding.—VI. It gives peace to the will. VII. It elevates to glory.—VIII. Conclusion..... 610

Sec. 11. Fourth motive. Example of Jesus Christ, the love we owe Him.—I. Humility of Jesus Christ.—II. He wishes us to imitate Him.—III. Love should excite us to this..... 625

TREATISE ON THE KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

BOOK THIRD.

EFFECTS OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

CHAPTER XI.

OF THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

I. All people have had sacrifices.—II. The Sacrifice of the Mass is essentially the same as that of the Cross.—III. Accidental differences which distinguished them.—IV. The Sacrifice of the Mass is a most august mystery, and the most pleasing offering to God.—V. The action most glorious to Our Lord.—VI. Most profitable to the Church.

I. The paschal lamb was, in the old law, one of the most celebrated figures of the adorable mystery of the Eucharist, especially because it served the Jews as sacrament and sacrifice: a sacrament because they ate it with religious rites; a sacrifice because they offered it to God. Our Lord has given to the Church His Sacred Body as Sacrament and Sacrifice: as a sacrament the faithful receive it as the nourishment of their soul; as a sacrifice, the priests offer it to God on our altars for the whole Church. We have spoken of the mystery of the Eucharist as a sacrament, we will now speak of it as a sacrifice.

All religions true and false which have existed from the beginning of the world, regarded sacrifice as the principal worship they rendered to the Divinity. The pagans had

sacrifices in all places ; for, as Plutarch one of their sages, said : "We find cities which have no walls to protect them, no laws to rule them, no prince to govern them, but we find no place where there is not some knowledge of the divinity, where there is not some sacrifice ; and a city would rather be without lands than without worship and sacrifice for the divinity it adores." But as the gods the pagans adored were nothing, the sacrifices they offered them had no merit. The Hebrews, the only people who before the coming of Our Lord, knew the true God, offered many species of sacrifice, as we see in the books of Moses, but St. Paul calls them *poor and defective sacrifices*, because they could not efface sin and confer grace. The sacrifice of the new law alone is perfect in every way, hence David calls it a *sacrifice of justice*, as much because it contains the Saint of Saints, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is justice and sanctity itself, as because it justifies souls by itself, by the infusion of grace and other gifts which it communicates. And, in effect, since sacrifice is the soul and essence of all religion, and since our religion is the holiest that ever was, the sacrifice it uses to honor the Divinity must be the holiest and most excellent of all sacrifices. Let us then see the excellence of this sacrifice, and the ends for which it has been instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. We must lay down as a principle that the sacrifice of the Mass which is that of the new law, offered daily to God on all our altars, is essentially the same as that offered Him on the Cross ; these sacrifices differ only in some ceremonies and circumstances. Our sovereign Priest, says St. Chrysostom, is He who has immolated the host which purifies us, it is the same host which we now immolate, it is one and the same sacrifice. St Cesarius, Archbishop of Arles, elegantly says on this subject : "Our Lord, before depriving us of His Sacred Body and translating it to Heaven, saw that it was necessary He should consecrate

His Body and Blood and leave them in the greatest and most august sacrament of the Church, that we might venerate every day the inestimable price of our salvation which He had once offered on the altar of the Cross ; and since we daily and hourly experience the happy effects of the great ransom, it is just that we should offer daily to God the Father, this price which Jesus paid to redeem us ; and that this Sacred Host, immolated for us, live continually in our memory, since it continually confers grace in us : a host truly one and perfect, which must be considered with the eyes of the mind and not with those of the body ; which we ought to esteem not according to appearances, but according to the sentiments faith produces in our hearts.

III. The accidental differences which distinguish the Sacrifice of the Mass from that of the Cross, are, that the Sacrifice of the Cross was visible and bloody, and was offered only once, that being more than sufficient, while the Sacrifice of the Mass is invisible, unbloody, and reiterated every day : that of the Cross is the sacrifice of redemption, satisfaction and payment ; that of the Mass is the sacrifice of application and commemoration, instituted to apply in particular the merit and virtue of this first sacrifice, and to represent it : hence the Priest in celebrating the Sacrifice of the Mass, describes by his sacerdotal garments and his actions, the principal circumstances of the death and passion of Our Lord.

IV. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the most angust and remarkable mystery in the Church, the most glorious and pleasing offering we could make to God during an entire eternity : 1. Because of the thing offered, which is Jesus Christ, Man-God, and only Son of God, of dignity and excellence infinite under every aspect, and of whom the offering is more agreeable to God than if we offered Him worlds without number, peopled with cherubim and

seraphim : 2. Because of the first and chief priest, since it is Our Lord ; for when a priest says Mass it is Our Lord that says it in his person, who sacrifices Himself even, and who offers Himself to His Father with His own hands ; hence He is called the *eternal Priest*, because He always continues to exercise his office. And it is clear that the sacramental words, *This is My Body*, which operate this great mystery, cannot be understood of man, who does not put his body under the species, but of Jesus Christ who pronounces them by the mouth of His minister. It is not a man, says St. Chrysostom, that changes the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ ; it is Jesus Christ Himself who has been crucified for us ; the priest celebrates the ceremony but the power of God does all. He says : This is My Body, and these words work the change. The Holy Council of Trent pronounces this oracle on the subject : "The same host, the same priest offers Himself now by the ministry of priests, who once offered himself on the altar of the Cross."

We ought to draw from this truth a remarkable consequence, which priests should always bear in mind : it is, that the Mass is a thing so excellent and divine, that all the virtues and good works of angels and men, of Mary the Queen of angels and men, all the homage they render and shall render to God for all eternity ; and the homages all creatures, actual and possible, could ever render Him, all would not be nearly so agreeable to God, nor procure Him as much glory as one Mass, even though it were celebrated by a bad priest ; because it is Our Lord who offers Himself to his Father, and by this offering He honors Him, praises and glorifies Him infinitely more because of the super-eminence of His person than all possible creatures could do.

V. More, Mass is the action which most rejoices Our Lord, inasmuch as he is man, because He knows that the

most ardent and vehement of His desires, the advancement of His Father's glory, is accomplished better by this means than by any other ; because He sees that His combats and victories and what He has most dear, that is, His Passion and Death, by which He repaired the injuries done to the Divinity, saved the human race, destroyed the empire of the prince of darkness, are represented in the Sacrifice of the Mass, not simply and in figure, but really by the thing itself, though without effusion of blood. It is evident that the greatest glory of Our Lord, and his most sweet pleasure, must be to see that His sufferings are not useless, His labors unfruitful ; that He has not become man and suffered death in vain, and as the application of His merits is made with greatest abundance in the mystery of the Eucharist, considered as a sacrament or a sacrifice, it is certain that it is in this mystery that Our Lord finds His dearest delights and interests.

VI. In fine the Holy Sacrifice is of all things here below that which procures most joy to the Church triumphant, which is in Heaven, most help to the Church suffering which is in purgatory, and most abundant profit to the Church militant which is on earth.

SECTION I.

CONTINUATION.

I. Ends of its institution.—II. It is a holocaust.—III. A sacrifice of propitiation.—IV.—Of thanksgivings.—V.—Of impetration.

I. As regards the ends for which the sacrifice of the Mass has been instituted, we must remark that there were in the old law four sorts of sacrifices distinguished by the divers ends to which they refer. The first sacrifice was a holocaust, which had the glory of God for its sole end ; the second were propitiatory, and were offered to God for

sins committed ; the third were eucharistic, to give thanks for benefits received ; by the fourth new favors were asked of God : hence they were called impetratory. To comprehend all this, we must know that we owe to God three sorts of homage : 1. We must acknowledge Him for our Creator and first beginning, of whom we hold being, soul, body, goods, honor, and generally all; 2. for Our Sovereign Lord who has power to dispose of us according to His good pleasure, to give and to take back life, health, goods, etc., to augment them or diminish them, to create or to annihilate when and how He pleases, and that we cannot reasonably resist Him in effect or even in thought ; 3. for our last end to which we ought to refer ourselves and all that concerns us, and which imposes on us the obligation of consuming ourselves entirely for His glory. Holocaust was established to render to God these three sorts of homages and duties : in this sacrifice the victim was entirely consumed without any reserve, man thus wishing to show to His God that, since He held all in His hand, he wished to do Him homage for all, and that he acknowledged in Him the power to destroy and take away life, as he killed and destroyed this victim. As we sin every day and continually offend His Divine Majesty, we ought every day to ask pardon, satisfy His justice, appease His anger : this was the end of the propitiatory sacrifices. A theologian remarked on this subject that sin, even the lightest, entailing on the man who commits it the loss of goods, honor and life, God, by an effect of his mercy, transferred the pain of death to the animal which was sacrificed to Him, and hence the sinner who offered the sacrifice put his hands between the horns of the victim as if to acknowledge himself worthy of the death this animal was going to suffer. We receive continually from the liberal hand of God numberless benefits, general and particular, in the order of nature and that of grace ; we ought therefore

to thank Him ; such is end of the eucharistic sacrifice. Finally, as we need a thousand things for body and soul which He alone can give us, we must ask them of Him and use proper and efficacious means to obtain them : this was the end of the impetratory sacrifice.

II. Now, to return to our subject, we say that the Sacrifice of the Mass which is the same with that of the Cross, has succeeded to all the sacrifices of the ancient law, that it fulfils all their ends but with an excellence infinitely above theirs : 1. It is a most perfect holocaust, since we render to God an infinite honor in offering Him Our Lord ; we acknowledge Him as first principle in presenting Him His Word, His Incarnate Son, the first born of all creatures ; as Sovereign Lord of all things with absolute power to dispose of them as He pleases, since at the least sign of His will the substances of bread and wine which are on earth, and the principal sustenance of our life, are destroyed in this mystery ; the Humanity of Our Lord, which is elevated in Heaven above all creatures, comes under the species of the host where, though living, it is represented as dead. Finally, we acknowledge God as our last end, since we refer to His glory Our Lord Himself, and with Him all men as members in their head, subjects in their King, and generally all beings which are naturally included in Jesus Christ, inasmuch as He is Man, and supernaturally and divinely, inasmuch as He is Man-God. Thus we show to God that by reason of His infinite greatness He merits a sacrifice of infinite excellence, and we offer Him such a sacrifice in offering Him Jesus Christ in the Mass ; this is certainly for us an inestimable happiness. A soul inflamed with love of God and desire of His glory, said : I would wish at each word and every respiration to be able to produce infinite worlds, filled with angels infinitely more perfect than those in Heaven, to praise, honor and thank God ; and God showed him that He had

given him a means infinitely more noble and more powerful to execute his design, in the Sacrifice of the Mass, where the Son offers to His Father a sacrifice so excellent and so perfect that it equals His greatness and infinite dignity, and renders Him all the praises and glory He merits from him.

III. 2. The Sacrifice of the Mass is a sacrifice of propitiation, since it is the same as that of the Cross which, as faith teaches, has effaced all the sins of men by the Blood of Jesus Christ shed thereon ; which has paid, and even with superabundance, all that was due for them to the Divine Justice. The Sacrifice of the Mass makes us enjoy all the goods the sacrifice of the Cross has acquired us ; it gives us the liberty the sacrifice of the Cross has merited for us ; it is a a remedy of redemption and salvation which is applied to our wounds ; it is the celestial medicine which will infallibly heal all our maladies. St. Chrysostom says that the angels always pray for us, but especially during the Sacrifice of the Mass : The angels then, says this golden mouth, bend the knee before Our Lord, and the archangels pray to Him ; they seize this happy moment because the time of this sacred oblation is favorable to them ; and as men who present the olive branch are accustomed to bend the knee before kings, and as the sight of this olive recalls to them mercy, so the angels, instead of the olive branch, present the Body of Our Lord, saying : We pray Thee, Lord, for those whom Thou hast so much loved, for whom Thou hast shed all Thy Blood and suffered death ; we pray for those for whom Thou hast immolated this Body and shed this Blood.

We ought then to use with great care this means of obtaining pardon of our sins, and turning aside from us the vengeance of God. The great Albuquerque, conqueror of the East Indies, seeing himself in danger of shipwreck because of a violent tempest which agitated his vessel,

took a child in his arms and, holding it aloft, placed it between heaven and himself, in order to arrest by this species of opposition the chastisement with which God wished to punish his sins. When the Priest elevates the Sacred Host at the Mass, we ought to elevate it with him, to oppose in like manner this spotless Lamb to the thunders of the Divine vengeance about to fall on us for our crimes.

IV. 3. The Sacrifice of the Mass is eucharistic. By it we offer to God thanksgiving worthy of the benefits He bestows on us. It is called *eucharistic*, says Origen, because it is a symbol of the gratitude and thanks we render to God. St. Chrysostom thus explains this word: The adorable and salutary mystery we celebrate bears the name of Eucharist, that is, thanksgiving, because it is the memorial of a great number of benefits; hence, at the moment of its institution Our Lord *gave thanks* to God His Father, to show us that this sacrifice serves us for this purpose. This is why in the primitive Church, there was a custom as St. Denis relates, of chanting before the consecration a canticle called *Eucharistia.*

We are replenished with the benefits of God; on whatever side we turn we see only favors and effects of the love He bears us. It is then very reasonable to give Him thanks; but how can we do it? What can we give Him for so many favors? The law of gratitude requires that we give as much as we have received, and even something more, if we desire to fulfil the law in all its perfection, that there may be, as the word implies, something *gratis.* Now, *what shall we render to the Lord* to satisfy this duty? *What shall I render to the Lord for all He has done for me?* asks David. If we give Him our bodies and souls, our goods and honors, we give Him only His own goods, for it is of Him we hold them, and, besides, what are they all in comparison of the supernatural goods He has given us by

grace, and what He will give us eternally by glory, and above all, what He has given us in His only Son who became incarnate, led a life of poverty and labor, and died on a Cross for us? What can we find in all our treasures which is not infinitely less valuable than the smallest drop of His Blood, the least of His pains? What can we render Him for all His benefits? Alas, we have nothing. For this reason Our Lord, touched with compassion at the sight of our poverty, has enriched us with all his treasures, and has instituted the Sacrifice of the Mass in which He gives Himself to us that we may take Him and offer Him to God His Father in gratitude for all He has given us, and to enable us to fulfil the law of gratitude. We fulfil it entirely because we give Him infinitely more than the created goods He has given us, and though the offering has been given us, yet we give Him a thing that belongs to us, since His goodness and love have placed it in our power. Thus David after he had asked : *What shall I render to the Lord for all His favors?* immediately answers : *I will take the Chalice of salvation,* as if he had said : of myself I have nothing, my treasures are insufficient, but I shall offer to God His own Son as a thing which belongs to me, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass ; with this rich present I shall make a suitable thanksgiving, I will render Him all the duties of perfect gratitude.

V. Finally the Sacrifice of the Mass is impetratory, to obtain all goods of body and soul, temporal and eternal, of which we have need ; for Our Lord is of infinitely greater value than anything we can ask of God ; besides the God who, by his infinite liberality, foresees our wants and gives us numberless things of which we have not even thought, can He refuse us anything when we offer Him His well-beloved Son? Holy Mass has the power to obtain what we ask : 1. Because Jesus Christ offers to His Father in our favor all the merits of His life and death : 2. Because

Our Lord actually prays in Heaven for those who offer the Mass or for whom it is offered ; for, though His beatified state hinders Him from meriting, it does not hinder Him from interceding : 3. Because of the prayers of the Church which are made at Mass, and which in themselves are very agreeable to God : 4. Because of our own prayers which are more efficacious then than at any other time, not only because they are made in the Name of Jesus Christ as they ought always be, but because they are more united to His, and because He Himself presents them to His Father. It is thus that the Mass is an impetratory sacrifice ; but what does it obtain ? We have already said that it obtains all. Let us now speak in detail.

It obtains for the sinner grace to repent of his mortal sins, not however in a certain infallible manner ; or as the schools say, *ex condigno*, but it presses the Divine mercy to have pity on this man for whom it is offered, and to give him a powerful and efficacious remedy to quit his dangerous state : which the Holy Sacrifice obtains more surely than any other means. The Sacrifice of the Mass obtains for the just pardon of his venial sins, either by its own virtue as some theologians teach, or, as others assert with more probability, because of the interior acts of virtue which it makes the just practice and which of themselves efface these sins. It obtains for the just an increase of habitual grace, charity, and all virtues, not only by the act of Religion of the Mass, but also by many other virtuous acts to which it disposes ; further, the Sacrifice of the Mass obtains great actual graces, particular succors to practice good works, to live in charity and to persevere till death. Finally, we obtain by this sacrifice all necessary temporal things, as far as God finds it expedient for His glory and our salvation to bestow them.

SECTION II.

CONSEQUENCES WHICH PRIESTS OUGHT TO DRAW FROM THIS DOCTRINE.

I. They are obliged to lead a holy life.—II. To say Mass often.—III. With great devotion.

From all we have said of the infinite excellence of the Sacrifice of the Mass, priests ought to deduce three important consequences.

I. They are obliged by the eminent dignity to which the sacerdotal state elevates them, to practice virtue with fervor, and to lead a holy life ; there ought to be a certain proportion between the dignity and the conduct, otherwise there would be frightful disorder. The priesthood, says St. Ignatius, martyr, is the greatest glory and the highest good we can possess on earth. The Emperor Justinian has left us these remarkable words : The two greatest favors God can confer on man are the priesthood and royalty, because by the first He entrusts him with His own business, and by the second He confides to him the government of men. Hence St. Francis, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, said, that if he met at the same time a priest and an angel, he would salute the priest first, because the office of a priest is more honorable than that of an angel. What the blessed Bishop of Geneva, St. Francis de Sales, relates of the penitentiary of his Church, confirms the saying of St. Francis of Assisi. This holy man, among other favors that he received from God, ordinarily saw his good angel under some sensible figure ; before he was ordained the angel went in advance of him, but after he was elevated to the priesthood the angel always gave him precedence everywhere. And in fact, to what degree of honor and glory is not the priest elevated, since he has the two greatest offices in the universe? By the one he makes

the living God descend on earth in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, by the other he makes men ascend to Heaven by virtue of the Sacrament of Penance. Hence the noble and learned Pynesius, Bishop of Cyrene, said that the Priest ought to be a divine man. St. Denis adds that he is obliged to great purity to render himself worthy as far as he can of the adorable and august sacrament he celebrates ; that he ought to watch over his actions that they may be a picture of the divine perfections ; that he ought always keep his eyes fixed on the divine life of Jesus on earth to imitate Him in all. Elsewhere the same father says : Priests who offer the Holy Sacrifice ought to be extremely pure, and have no stain in mind or imagination : this is indicated by the washing of the hands, and afterwards of the fingers, before consecration ; it is with the same purity of heart that they ought to approach the tremendous sacrifice. Thus they will be filled with the clearest and most brilliant lights of God, who delights to shed them on pure mirrors which receive them with more plenitude. St. Chrysostom treats this subject at great length in the celebrated *Treatise on the Priesthood ;* now, he says that the priest ought to surpass other Christians in virtue as Christians surpass idolaters ; again, that the soul of the priest ought to be purer than the rays of the sun. What ought to be purer than the soul of him who offers this sacrifice ? he asks. What ray of the sun should be comparable in purity to the hand which divides the Sacred Flesh, and the tongue which is purpled with the Blood of the Son of God ? Let the priest reflect on these words and conform his life to them ; let him join the splendor of his actions to the glory of his dignity, and be as venerable by his works before man as he is elevated by his ministry before God.

II. Priests ought to make a form and constant resolution to say Mass every day, or at least as often as they can.

This is the holy custom of all priests regular and secular of our time who apply themselves to exercises of true devotion ; and if in the primitive Church laics communicated every day, priests certainly did the same, with more reason. I offer to God every day the spotless Lamb, said St. Andrew to the tyrant. We, priests, says St. Cyprian, celebrate daily the Sacrifice of God. St. Gregory the Great relates of Cassius, Bishop of Narnia, that he was in the habit of saying Mass daily ; God one day commanded one of his chaplains to say to him that he did well, that his devotion was agreeable to Him, and that if he continued faithful He would soon call him to Himself and recompense him amply. And in fact a priest does wrong if he fails to offer this divine sacrifice when he is not hindered by some legitimate reason, because he deprives the Holy Trinity of infinite praise and glory, Our Lord of great joys, the blessed of new delights, the souls in purgatory of refreshment in their sufferings, and himself of very great advantages. The priest who fails in this duty shows that he little knows the dignity and the sovereign excellence of the Sacrifice of the Mass, for it is more honorable and glorious to him to say Mass once than it would be to govern all the empires of the earth.

III. Priests ought to say Mass with profound respect and great devotion, interior and exterior ; hence they ought to prepare carefully to say it well, following what we have said of preparation for communion, according to their state. Our Lord prepared Himself during thirty-three years by all the actions of His holy life to offer to God the Sacrifice of the Cross ; priests ought thus to prepare themselves, at least for some time, to offer the Sacrifice of the Mass, since it is substantially the same. They must offer it for the ends for which it has been instituted ; to acknowledge the sovereign dominion of God and our dependance, to testify the honor and gratitude we owe Him, to

obtain pardon of our sins, to thank Him for His benefits, to obtain of His goodness all the graces we need, in fine for all the ends they desire. They must celebrate with modesty, recollection, attention, not hurriedly, taking the necessary time to pronounce distinctly all the words, to perform all the ceremonies with becoming gravity: for as there ought to be some proportion between the end and the means, and as the ceremonies of the Mass are instituted to represent the most sublime mysteries, and to devote the minds and hearts of celebrant and assistants to holy affections, to acts of adoration addressed immediately to the divine Majesty; if the words are not well articulated, if the ceremonies are not performed with decorum, and maturely, far from nourishing piety, they will become an occasion of scandal and impiety. The best advice we can give to a priest is to keep his mind attentive to the sense of the words he pronounces, to relish them, to form in his mind acts of virtue which correspond to them, and to accompany all these acts with great respect.

It is a doctrine taught by the Holy Fathers and authorized by experience, that when the Priest says Mass the altar is surrounded by a great number of angels who assist at this august and tremendous mystery with modesty, respect and ineffable devotion, and that several of them have regarded it as a great glory to serve Mass as they served the Mass of St. Oswald, and that of the Venerable John of Parma, general of the Franciscans. St. Nilus relates that many troops of angels descended from heaven when St. John Chrysostom celebrated the holy mysteries, and that the Saint commonly saw them, clothed in white, with bare feet, prostrating themselves before the altar with profound respect, till the end of the Sacrifice. Speaking in general, St. Chrysostom says: The angels assist the Priest during the Holy Sacrifice, and all the celestial

powers unite in joyful song ; the altar is surrounded with these blessed Spirits who remain there to adore Jesus Christ. The holy Doctor confirms this by a history he heard from a person worthy of credit : " A certain person related to me that an excellent old man to whom God had revealed His secrets and shown the things of the other life, had assured him that he had seen a multitude of angels clothed in shining apparel, who surrounded the altar during the Holy Sacrifice, and that they inclined their hearts as soldiers incline before their King." If these celestial spirits, so elevated above us by the excellence of their nature, and the gifts of grace, have such humility, respect and devotion in merely assisting at Mass, what would be their sentiments if they were allowed to celebrate it. Without doubt we ought to think that their respect would be far greater, were it possible. And we wretched mortals, dust and ashes, with what humility, what self-annihilation and what piety ought we to celebrate these divine and tremendous mysterious?

The great and famous Archbishop of Cologne, St. Herbert, was touched with such devotion in saying Mass, that his face, which bore habitually marks of the virtues with which his holy soul was adorned, was then so luminous and resplendent that he seemed an angel rather than a man. What were the sentiments and transports of St. Lawrence Justininan? His body became, as it were, immovable, and had only sufficient motion to serve his soul, which was totally taken up with this great and important action ; his face shone with angelic modesty, his eyes distilled torrents of tears, and his mind was transported by the force of his ravishments. Nearly every day St. Francis de Sales gave an example on this point, as on all others. No priest could celebrate Mass with more majesty, respect and recollection than he ; while he vested himself in the sacerdotal ornaments, he drove far from him all other

thoughts: as soon as he put his foot in the first step of the altar his interior and exterior became, as it were, angelic; his face often appeared resplendent with the radiations of the Sun of Justice which were communicated to him principally at this moment. Let us strive to imitate these Saints, and form ourselves on these examples.

St. Bonnet, Bishop of Clermont, a great servant of Mary, being one night alone in a church whither he had retired to give himself with more silence and leisure to prayer, at the moment in which his affections were most vehement, heard a sweet and ravishing melody, and soon the church was filled with light; he then saw the Blessed Virgin enter, accompanied by a great number of angels and saints, who walked processionally, chanting the praises of Our Lord and of His Holy Mother. Arrived at the altar, some of them asked who should celebrate Mass. Mary replied that her well beloved-servant, Bonnet, bishop of the place, would celebrate. The holy prelate, hearing these words, was seized with fear, and so deeply penetrated with the sentiment of his unworthiness that he sought to hide himself, and on retiring fell against a stone which miraculously softened, and received the impression of his body. But his humility but rendered him more worthy of the honor which he fled; he was constrained to obey. Being conducted to the altar, some saints meet him and he celebrates Mass in the midst of this glorious assemblage, assisted and served by these saints. After Mass, Mary gave him a very white alb, of a material so fine and delicate that the like was never before seen on earth, and was afterwards shown as a very precious relic. Now, I ask, with what modesty, attention, devotion and love did this Saint celebrate Mass in the midst of such an assemblage? Without doubt we can hardly conceive greater or more perfect sentiments; they ought to be our model when we celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

SECTION III.

MANNER OF HEARING MASS.

I. Signification of the principal parts of the Mass.—II. All the faithful offer the Mass in the person of the Priest.—III. Manner of hearing Mass well.—IV. Of Spiritual Communion.

I. Many methods of hearing Mass are given which are all good and useful. To comprehend clearly that which we give, it will be well at first to give some idea of the parts of the Mass and what they signify. Mass is composed of three principal parts : the first is from the beginning of the Mass to the Offertory ; this was formerly called Mass of the Catechumens, because they had the right to assist at this part. *The Introit*, the *Confiteor*, the *Kyrie eleison*, represent the misery and blindness in which the human race was plunged before the coming of the Messiah ; by these prayers His coming is ardently petitioned for. The *Gloria in excelsis* is said to thank God for this infinite benefit. The Epistle marks the doctrine of the old law which served as a preparation for the new ; the *Gospel* proclaims the oracles emanating from the Incarnate wisdom. The Sign of the Cross we make on the book, the lips, the forehead and the heart, to show that this book announces the doctrine of Jesus Crucified, which we ought lovingly to carry in our hearts and which we ought to confess fearlessly with our lips though it cost our lives. From Easter to Ascension the Paschal Candle is lit to show that this doctrine has dissipated all darkness, and enlightened the Gentiles with true light. After reading the Gospel we kiss it with respect and love, as if to imprint on it the seal of our affection. The *Credo* is the fruit of the Gospel, which has been embraced not only by ignorant people, but by monarchs, philosophers and orators. After the *Credo* the deacon sent away the Catechumens saying : *Ite, missa est.*

The second part is from the Offertory to the *Pater:* it is called the Mass of the Sacrifice ; the Priest then begins to speak in a low tone, as much to conceal from the Catechumens (then retiring) the knowledge of the mysteries, as to imprint a profound respect on the faithful who remain. The Priest washes the tips of his fingers to show with what purity we should celebrate this divine Sacrifice, or even assist at it. As it is an action which infinitely surpasses all human power, the Priest turns towards the people and demands the help of their prayers. He then prays secretly for some time ; after, he raises his voice that all the people may hear him, and know that they speak to God by his ministry. But he warns them by these works *; Sursum corda,* to raise the heart and mind to celestial things, to forget the earth, to adore with a lively faith and profound respect the most august mystery of religion, and to sacrifice the Son of God to His Father for our salvation. He again admonishes them to give thanks for the divine bounty with which Our Lord deigns to descend in the host, and for this he uses the words spoken to Jesus at His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. At the canon the Priest prays for the Pope, the Bishop, the ruler, and all the faithful. After the consecration, the Priest excuses himself for having undertaken an action so sublime by alleging the express command God has given to do so. He prays the Divine Majesty that this Sacrifice may be agreeable to Him, and he asks the effects of it for himself, for the assistants and for all the faithful departed.

The principal object of the third part of the Mass is the Communion, for which the Priest disposes himself and those who assist, by his prayers and especially by the *Lord's Prayer*, in which is asked the daily and supersubstantial bread, that is, the Eucharist : he disposes himself by the peace he asks and gives, because this Sacrament is a Sacrament of peace and unity ; by acts of humility and an

avowal of his unworthiness which he expresses in the words of the humble centurion, *Lord*, I am not *worthy*. After communion follow prayers of thanksgiving, of praise, of joy at the sight of such a benefit. The little we have said suffices to give an idea of the parts of the Mass, and of the principal things done thereat.

It must be remarked that though the Priest alone offers the Sacrifice of the Mass to God, the other faithful may offer it also, because Our Lord has instituted it to serve to all and each of us as a sacrifice worthy of being offered to the Divinity and as a victim agreeable to Him, so that it is a good common to all and to each in particular, not only because all sacrifice is a worship and a protestation made in the name of all, but rather because each Christian has a right in this divine host, and can offer it to God in his own name and for his own good, as if it belonged to him alone ; it can be offered as a thing common to all, and peculiar to each.

II. The Sacrifice of the Mass is offered in two manners : the first is exterior, and if I may so speak, material ; the second is interior and moral. The first is peculiar to priests who visibly and materially take the host and offer it to God ; this has been the practice always and in all nations : certain men have always been chosen and employed in the sacrifices and exterior offices of religion, to the exclusion of others. The second manner belongs to all, and it is the principal ; it consists in contrition of heart, in the immolation of our vices, in the offering of our affections, in interior acts of faith, hope, charity, humility, and adoration, praise, thanksgiving, etc., with which we ought to accompany the exterior sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Our Lord, if we desire to make it profitable to us. Speaking on the subject, St. Gregory the Great says : It is necessary that when we offer the Sacrifice of the Mass we should offer ourselves also to God in

sacrifice; and since we celebrate the mysteries of the Passion of Our Saviour, we ought to imitate what we do? Jesus Christ will be truly a victim for us if we become victims with Him." In this sense St. Peter calls all Christians *a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood*, and St. Leo remarks on this, that the sign of the Cross consecrates as kings all Christians, and the unction of the Holy spirit makes them all priests: and that his words may not be misunderstood, he thus explains how Christians are priests: what is more royal than to subject the mind to God and the body to the spirit? What more sacerdotal than to offer to the Lord a pure conscience and to immolate on the altar of the heart hosts of tender and sincere piety!

III. This supposed, we must represent sweetly and tranquilly, or call to mind, what has been said of the signification of the different parts of the Mass, uniting our intention with that of the Priest; and as the consecration and communion are the two principal parts of the sacrifice, since consecration includes the mystery of the Eucharist as a sacrifice and communion as a sacrament, these parts must be fulfilled as follows:

1. When you go to the Church with the intention of hearing Mass, proceed with recollection, devotion and spiritual joy, thinking you go to assist at an action most glorious and pleasing to God, which procures him more praise and honor than he could receive by all other means, an action which procures more joy and content to Our Lord than He draws from all creatures together; finally, an action which will apply to you in the most abundant manner the merits of His death, and obtain for you the greatest treasure of graces and spiritual riches.

2. In entering the church, after having taken holy water with sentiments of faith and contrition, we must seek a place where we shall not be much exposed to distraction,

and there strive to penetrate ourselves with sentiments of the most profound respect, sentiments which have their source in the lively thought of the presence of God, who deigns to dwell in the Church as in His own house, with all the splendor of His divine Majesty, and chiefly on the altar, on which we must fix our eyes, seeing with the eye of faith the Holy Trinity who awaits this Sacrifice as the greatest homage we can render to His glory. We must must see the angels and archangels that fill the church, surrounding the altar especially, as we have said, with sentiments of the most profound respect and humility. We must imitate them, and particularly the good angel God has given us, and whom we ought to represent near us, and in this thought remain—kneeling with modesty and devotion, without speaking, without turning the head to see who goes and who comes, avoiding the irreverent postures which so many ignorant persons adopt, for which they will be exposed to the terrible effects of His justice, instead of experiencing those of His mercy. And, in fact, when we are at Mass or before the Blessed Sacrament, all persons and all material things ought to become invisible for us, and to make no impression on our senses; this divine Son of Justice, whom the angels, as St. Crysostom says, regard with trembling, and whom they durst not closely contemplate because of the wonderful splendor of His Majesty, should so obscure those objects by His excessive light, and fix so unchangeably the eyes of our body and soul, that it would be impossible for us to see anything else or be distracted by any object whatever: luminous bodies outshine, by the abundance of their light, all that surrounds them, and the sun makes the brightness of the stars invisible.

III. After having so disposed body and soul, we must first ask pardon of God for our sins, saying with the priest the *Confiteor*, with a heart touched with repentance, to

prepare by purity of soul, to participate in the fruits of the Sacrament. We must then offer the Mass for the ends for which this divine sacrifice was instituted : the priest as ambassador of the human race, and especially of Catholics, offers to God the Sacrifice of the Mass to adore Him in the name of all, to acknowledge Him as the first Beginning, the Sovereign Lord and the Last End : to obtain pardon of the sins daily committed against Him, to thank Him for all His benefits ; to obtain new succor in all necessities. Well ; let every one who assists offer the Sacrifice for the same ends ; we may afterwards solicit great graces for ourselves, our parents, friends, enemies, for the just, for sinners, for the souls in purgatory, in order to praise and thank God for them and in their place. When the priest elevates the Sacred Host, we must offer it to the Eternal Father for the same intentions, and apply ourselves, till the *Pater Noster*, to produce acts of faith, adoration, petition, and all the other acts proper to render our offering agreeable as regards the Divine Majesty, and efficacious as regards the grace we demand.

IV. 4. After the *Pater*, we must prepare for spiritual Communion, which is one of the most excellent exercises of the interior life, and which fills the soul with great goods and divine consolations. The Holy Council of Trent says, conformably to the doctrine of the Fathers, that the Sacrament of the Eucharist can be received in three manners: 1. sacramentally, 2. spiritually, 3. sacramentally and spiritually together. We speak not here of the first manner, which is the communion of those in the state of mortal sin like Judas ; nor of the third, which is the communion of those in the state of grace, but of the communion of those who, not being able to receive really and sacramentally the Body of Our Lord, receive it by the ardor of their desires, feeding on it in spirit, by acts of lively faith and true charity, and who by this means ren-

der themselves worthy of receiving the fruits of this adorable sacrament, as the Council of Trent declares.

To develop still farther this doctrine, I say that to make spiritual communion well, we must avow that we are unworthy to receive sacramentally the Body of Our Lord, and yet desire ardently to receive it, saying eagerly with the servants of Job: *Who will give us of his flesh that we may be filled?*[1] We must offer Him this inflamed desire which we would immediately satisfy if we had the power; and, to dispose ourselves to receive Him, we must offer Him acts of faith in the truth of this mystery, contrition, charity, hope, etc., of which we have spoken for sacramental communion, and which should be made also in some measure before spiritual comunion.

The soul thus prepared, we must, when the priest communicates, beseech Our Lord that, since the minister represents the assistants and holds them united in his person, He would deign by his instrumentality to come to us, and to dwell in our hearts. This done, we must contemplate Our Lord present in a special manner within us, make acts of thanksgiving and produce the affections of which we have spoken for sacramental communion, as far as they apply to spiritual communion; and thus it will produce as much effect as sacramental communion does in many persons.

In conclusion, I repeat, that the Sacrifice of the Mass being the most agreeable and honorable offering to God and Our Lord, the most useful for us and for the whole Church, it is an excellent practice to offer daily, and often during the day, all the Masses which are being said in the universe, and which will be said till the consummation of ages. It is also a very profitable devotion for seculars to get Masses said often; and when they make any offering to churches, to give always something necessary for the

[1] Job xxxi. 31

celebration of this mystery, which concerns more immediately the Body and Blood of Our Lord, that since they cannot themselves offer this sacrifice to God, they may at least contribute to it as much as is possible. Thus St. Wenceslaus, King of Bohemia, forgetting in some manner his royal dignity, or rather enhancing it by a remarkable act of piety, reaped himself the wheat during the harvest, and gathered the grapes during the vintage, necessary for the celebration of the Mass. As to spiritual communion we can make it in all time and places, but principally in the Church when we hear Mass or visit the Blessed Sacrament; and as it is an exercise extremely profitable to us, we should make it often during the day.

CHAPTER XII.

OF VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

I.—Why Our Lord is in the Holy Communion.—II. It is just to visit Him. III. It is sweet to visit Him.—IV. It is useful to visit Him.

It is very important that souls who profess to love Our Lord should visit Him often in the Sacrament of the Altar. and know how to make these visits profitable.

I. We must consider and admire the incomprehensible love of Our Lord towards us, since not content to have given us His Body, His Blood, His Divinity for our food, and to offer in sacrifice to God His Father, His love excites Him to remain day and night on our altars that He may be always near us by His corporal presence, to speak to us, to hear us, to console us, to strengthen us, to instruct us, to procure us the sweet satisfaction of enjoying here below His presence, to be always near us, to succor us in our wants. He desires, too, to show with wonderful splendor His providence, His liberality, His sweetness, and above all, the infinite love He bears us; that He is near

us in heart as well as in body and that *His delights are to be with the children of men. King Solomon hath made himself a litter of the wood of Libanus: The pillars thereof he made of silver, the seat of gold, the going up of purple; the midst he covered with charity for the daughters of Jerusalem!*[1] Some, with good reason, explain these words of Our Lord, the true Solomon who, burning with love in His Divine Sacrament, remains always in our tabernacles for the satisfaction of souls whom he loves.

II. To correspond to such an excess of love we should visit as often as we can this Prince of Peace on the mysterious throne where he awaits us. Certainly, it is just and reasonable to go often to this great and august Lord, this infinite Majesty on the throne of His love, since it is for us He dwells there in so admirable a manner. If the King for your sake, to honor you and show the particular love he bears you, should dwell in the town you inhabit, what would you think of such condescension? What would you do? Would you not evince gratitude for so great a favor? Would it not be a monstrous ingratitude not to visit him? Would you not think yourself obliged by all manner of reasons to be with him day and night, if he would permit you to keep his company, since he has come only for you? If reason alone would teach you how to act on such an occasion, it should also teach you what you ought to do for Our Lord residing in the Blessed Sacrament, since He is there only for you; and if you fail in this duty, are you not culpable of the blackest ingratitude? We are amazed at the stupidity of the Jews; we are almost enraged against them, that having Our Lord in their midst, eating and drinking in their houses, healing their sick, working miracles in their presence, they neither knew nor honored Him; but we have more reason to accuse and blame ourselves, since having the same Lord continually in our

[1] Cant. iii. 9.

churches, where he operates still greater wonders, we render Him not the honor we owe Him ; we refrain from visiting Him, and we act as though we knew Him not. The example of the holy angel sought to confound and instruct us : they are always prostrate before Our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist ; they adore, praise and glorify Him continually ; they are ravished at the sight of the love God testifies for us. If they render to God Our Lord all these duties, though this mystery has not been instituted for them, they teach us that if we cannot surpass them, which we ought to do were it in our power, this mystery being for us, we ought at least imitate them, and do as David says : *I will sing praise to Thee in the sight of the angels : I will worship towards Thy Holy Temple*, before the altar on which Thou deignest to dwell for love of me ; *I will give glory to Thy Name*, for the *mercy* Thou dost exercise towards us in deigning to dwell among the children of men, *and for Thy truth.*[1] Among men not to return the visits of friends is great incivility ; the rudest would not be capable of this vulgarity Since the Creator of Heaven and earth has done us the honor to visit us, it is just and reasonable that we should return His visit ; He comes to honor us, to give us marks of His love ; for this purpose He dwells day and night on the throne of His love on our altars, we ought then to render Him the love and honor due him by visiting Him ; we ought even to bear Him company day and night, and if we cannot do this, we should be with Him as often as possible.

III. This duty is not only reasonable, it is also sweet and delicious. Where is the good son who does not regard it as a happiness to visit his father? Where is the brother who is not eager to visit his brother? Where is the bride that does not seek her delight in the company of her spouse? Is it not the greatest joy of a friend to visit his

[1] Ps. cxxxvii.

friend? It ought then be for us an indescribable consolation to have near us always and in all places in this land of exile, Jesus Christ Our Saviour; to be able to speak to Him to open our heart to Him, to expose to Him our wants and to treat familiarly with Him. If a prisoner were permitted to have with him his brother, his spouse, his friend to assist him, to nourish him, to entertain him, to console him, to make him pass the time agreeably; if his friend gave him hope of being set at liberty, and aided him to bring this about, all this would doubtless soften his anguish and charm away his pains: Well, Our Lord, Our Father, Our Brother, Our Spouse, Our Perfect Friend, Our All, is with us for all these designs in the prison of this world, in this valley of tears. *Behold I am with you all days,*[1] *says* He, and I shall be with you *even to the consummation of the world.* What ineffable mercy! The Holy Scripture relates that by a special grace accorded to Joseph *wisdom descended with him into his prison and abandoned him not in his chains.*[2] But it is a more signal favor that Our Lord the Incarnate Wisdom should be with us in the prison of this unfortunate life, and remain with us during the whole period of our captivity. Valerius Maximus relates that the Queen Hysicrates loved her husband Mithridates King of Pontus, so ardently that for his sake she gloried in despising the ornaments of her beauty; she cut off her hair, dressed like a man, accustomed herself to ride much on horseback and to endure all sorts of fatigue that she might be able to accompany him in all dangers. When he was defeated by the victorious arms of Pompey she followed him everywhere with indefatigable courage, inviolable fidelity and constant love. This was, as the historian observes,[3] a very great consolation and joy to this unhappy prince in the midst of his sad reverses and bitter misfortunes. Our Lord in the state to which He is re-

[1] Matt. xxviii. 20. [2] Wis. x. 13. [3] Val. Max. lib 4. cap 6.

duced in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, operates for us far greater prodigies of love, which ought to be a powerful balm to assuage entirely, or at least to sweeten greatly, all the evils of body and mind which we must endure in this valley of tears.

To experience these happy effects we must visit Jesus Christ. Yes, you may say, but I see Him not, I know He is there, but though that is a great happiness, my desire is not fully satisfied, because I do not see Him. I answer that we do see Him. You wish to see Him, says St. Chrysostom, you see Him, you touch Him. We see Him first with the eyes of faith, which are more clear-sighted than those of the body, because they stop not at the door of the tabernacle, at the color and form of the host; they go farther and see Our Lord hidden in the tabernacle, under the appearances of the host. We see Him in some manner with the eyes of the body: do we not say we see a person though he be covered with his garments and we see only his face and hands? And even though the face be veiled and the hands gloved, we rightly say we see him; because effectually it is himself and not a phantom that is before us, though we see only the garments which cover him; so though we see not Our Lord in the Eucharist divested of its veils, we see Him nevertheless, because we see the garments which cover Him, that is to say, the species under which He certainly is. Hence the Holy Virgin, Blessed Colette, particularly esteemed her eyes, because by means of them she could see Our Lord hidden in this divine mystery under the species or accidents. St. Margaret, daughter of the King of Hungary, after having communicated, held the cloth before such as were yet to communicate, in order that she might be able to gaze the longer on Our Lord in the Host. Since this is so, let us go to Him that we may see Him with the eyes of faith and even with

our corporal eyes, and so we may hope one day to enjoy all the delights of His divine presence.

IV. What ought still more to encourage us to this practice is, that it is very useful to us. You should never go to visit Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament without expecting some great grace ; He is in this august sacrament the living source of all graces, He desires that you should draw thence all that are necessary for you. *In those days*, the blessed days of the Gospel, says the Prophet Zachary, speaking of this mystery, *there shall be a fountain open to the house of David*, to all the faithful, *to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for the washing of the sinner*. Jesus Christ is in the Eucharist as the Sun of Justice which enlightens, heats, rejoices, vivifies and animates to labor. He is there as an omnipotent God to strengthen us ; as a good, liberal and all-merciful God to shower benefits upon us ; we have only to go to Him. If the King had established a man in the city where you reside, to give you money every time you should ask it, to provide your food, to give you clothing, to take care of you in sickness, to supply all your wants, it would not be necessary to press you to visit him : you would be every day at his door. Well, Our Lord is in His Church, still nearer to you ; He is there to give you temporal things according as He sees expedient for your salvation, and, what is more advantageous for you, to bestow graces which will conduct you to a blessed eternity : strength in your temptations, victory over your passions, light in your doubts, patience in your evils, consolations in your pains, treasures of graces ; He awaits you day and night, He desires nothing more than to enrich you and to see you go to Him, to profit by all these effects of His goodness ; why then are you so remiss? Why will you not go to Him? Why will you deprive yourself of all these goods? The thing is so easy, and the profit so great!

You will say, perhaps, I do visit the Blessed Sacrament, but I reap not these precious advantages. I reply, that these effects need not be sensible ; being for the soul and not for the body, they are spiritual, and not cognizable to the senses. I say, farther, that these effects will not always be produced immediately after you shall have visited the Holy Sacrament ; but when on that day and the following days you make an act of humility, obedience, patience or charity ; when you quell a motion to anger, when you stifle sentiments of vanity, the grace necessary for this, and which is given you, is the fruit of the visit you have made. And, it is evident that if man is liberal towards God, God who is infinitely richer and better, will be incomparably more liberal to man : consequently, if man visits God with a good will, God will recompense this visit, acknowledge the honor rendered Him, and the trouble taken to visit Him. Your labor then will not be lost ; every time you visit Him, you shall receive some benefit which you should not otherwise have received. Natural causes have a determinate space to which is limited their power over objects, and which is called the sphere of their activity : for instance, fire will heat air to a certain point and no farther: we may say that Our Lord, present in the Blessed Sacrament, acts with a certain breadth, as in the sphere of His activity, and it is then, that, as a consuming fire and a divine sun, He sheds around Him the rays of His graces, and casts forth His lights and flames. Now it is certain that the Church in which He deigns to dwell is enclosed in this space ; and though Our Lord, to produce these happy effects, asks not so much movement of the body as movement of the soul, that is to say, acts of faith, hope, charity, contrition, respect, etc., and that hence a person retired in his house can receive the sweet influence of the power of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist, provided he produce

the acts of which we speak, yet it is certain that he who shall approach Our Lord with the same sentiments shall be still more under this divine influence ; because in visiting Our Lord in His holy temple, he renders Him more honor and shows Him more love than one who does not make this visit, and even he should visit Our Lord without producing these interior acts, because of his great aridity ; though he should do no other thing than present himself before Our Lord, carrying thither his body with all the ardor of which he is capable, he would experience in time the power of this sacrament and gather its fruits : because this visit is an actual protest of faith in His real presence, a certain mark of respect, and a pledge of the love he bears to Jesus Christ : for if he believed not in the Real Presence, if he had not the intention to honor Jesus Christ, if he loved Him not, without doubt he would not have made this visit : all which cannot be said of him who, though able to make this visit, refrains from doing so, though he produce in his heart the acts of which we have spoken.

SECTION I.

MANNER OF VISITING THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

I. Divers intentions which we may propose to ourselves.—II. To see Him. III. To do Him homage.—IV. To thank Him.—V. To discover to Him our wants.—VI. To enjoy His presence.—VII. Other ends.

I. As to the manner of visiting the Holy Sacrament, we say that every time we have the happiness to do so we can make a spiritual communion, using for that purpose the acts already given. More, we can act as a courtier with his prince ; now he goes to see him, to consider his greatness, as those do who, having never seen the King, go to court to judge whether what they heard of him is true ;

again he goes to do him homage as his sovereign and to offer him his services ; at other times to thank him for favors received from him, and finally to make some request.

II. We can visit Him to have the honor of seeing Him ; from this proceed different excellent acts, as admiration, esteem, praise, benedictions, glorifications, love, joy. We must consider now the infinite love Jesus shows us in the Sacrament of the Altar ; again the ardent desire He has to be with us ; sometimes His meekness and goodness, the solicitude and paternal providence with which he watches over us ; at other times His liberality, His power, His wisdom, and all the perfections He manifests with such admirable splendor in this divine mystery. We must consider the heroic example He gives us of the virtues of humility, obedience, patience, etc. ; finally we must produce divers affections of the will in reference to all these perfections, and draw from these examples efficacious resolutions to regulate our lives.

III. Secondly, we should do homage to the infinite majesty of the Man-God as to our Sovereign Lord, our legitimate King, our true God, our Creator, our Preserver, our All. From these considerations spring two species of affections very noble and sublime : 1, a sentiment of interior and exterior adoration ; 2, an offering of our body, our soul, our being, our powers, our operations, our thoughts, our words, our actions, our honor, our goods, our time, our eternity, and all, in fine, since all comes to us from Him and belongs to Him.

IV. Thirdly, we must visit Jesus Christ to thank Him for His benefits, both spiritual and temporal, and this is the place to enter into the important exercise of thanksgiving of which we shall hereafter speak more at large. But the first grace for which we ought to thank Him is for having reduced Himself to such a state in the Sacrament

of the Eucharist, for all the wonders He there operates, and for all the benefits he there confers.

V. Fourthly, we must discover to Him all our miseries, humbly and with filial confidence, and ask of Him their remedy since He is on our altars to grant it. Ah! if we knew how to use this means, and to take the road that conducts us to the foot of the altar, when we experience any want, we should not be so miserable nor so overwhelmed with evils. Can we not say in the bitterness of our heart with Jeremiah : *For the affliction of the daughter of my people I am afflicted and made sorrowful, astonishment hath taken hold on me ;* how can she be the victim of so many miseries? *Is there no balm in Galaad? or is there no physician*[1] *in* the Church? Certainly, there is one, whose skill no malady can baffle : *why then is not the wound of the daughter of my people healed?* It is because she will not go to Him to ask his succor. This text is understood of the Sacrament of the Eucharist ; the word *Galaad*, a mountain of Arabia, signifies *reunion of witnesses.* This mountain produced all kinds of perfumes and aromatics ; this figure agrees then with Jesus Christ, as has been remarked by St. Thomas and Venerable Bede, since he has been announced and acknowledged by the testimonies of patriarchs, prophets, angels, men and all creatures, and since He encloses in the Eucharist an infallible remedy for all our evils.

VI. Fifthly, we can visit Jesus Christ to enjoy Him, to taste his presence in perfect repose of mind, to unite ourselves to Him, to rest in Him as in our centre, to apply ourselves to the exercise of love, and to produce acts of complacency, benevolence, and the other acts of which we have spoken in the Second Book : these acts will be all the more ardent since they are inspired by the presence of the beloved object. With the loving soul this practice

[1] Jerem. viii. 21.

ought to hold the first rank, because she can experience nothing more sweet than to be in the presence of the Beloved ; she can seek no more favorable occasion to pour forth all the ardor of her love, because the presence of the object besides replenishing her with joy, gives to the sentiments of love, a force and vivacity which his absence seems to weaken.

VII. We must go to Jesus Christ with the sentiments of Nicodemus who went to Him to be enlightened in his doubts ; as Magdalen, to obtain pardon of her sins ; as the woman of Chanaan, to obtain the deliverance of her daughter possessed by the demon ; as the centurion, to ask the cure of his sick servant ; as the leper, to be healed of his leprosy ; the deaf mute, to recover hearing and speech ; as the prince of the synagogue, to pray that life might be restored to his only daughter whom he had lost.

We must go to Jesus Christ as a beggar goes to a rich, liberal lord, a hungry man to a feast, a thirsty man to a sparkling fountain, the disciple to his master, a child to his father, a spouse to her dear husband, a friend to an intimate friend, an afflicted man to his consoler, a man who is cold to the fire : we must go to the Blessed Sacrament several times a day, as we go to the stove from time to time to warm our fingers, that we may thus return with renewed vigor to our work.

Finally, to facilitate the exercise of visiting the Blessed Sacrament, we must imitate here below, where we see Jesus Christ only under the eucharistic veils, the conduct and sentiments of the blessed in heaven. St. Teresa, all radiant with beauty and resplendent with light, appeared after her death to a holy person and said : You who are on earth, and we who are in Heaven, ought to be united in love and purity ; we in contemplating the Divine Essence ; you in adoring the most Holy Sacrament ; you

ought to perform towards this divine mystery what we perform towards the Divine Essence.

SECTION II.

CONCLUSION.

I. We ought to visit Jesus Christ.—II. Examples of the Saints.

I. Since visiting the Holy Sacrament is a practice so reasonable, so useful, so sweet, we must resolve to visit Our Lord as often as we can, and with the sentiments of which we have spoken; and let us be firmly convinced that we cannot make a single visit without drawing great fruits and amassing new riches. This is what the Saints did. *Thy* true *children*, says David *as young olive plants*, which preserve in all seasons their beauty and their verdure, *surrounded Thy* eucharistic *table;* they often communicate sacramentally, still oftener spiritually, they regard it as their sovereign felicity on earth to keep Thee company, to honor Thee, to pour out before Thee the sweet affections of their hearts. *Three score valiant ones of the most valiant in Israel, surround the bed of Solomon; all holding swords and most expert in war, every man's sword upon his thigh, because of the fears of the night.*[1] These are the faithful souls who remain as much as they can before the Blessed Sacrament where our Lord reposes under the species of bread and wine; it is here that these souls strengthen themselves for combats, receiving courage and arms to vanquish the prince of darkness. Our Lord himself says: *Where the body is, there shall the eagles be gathered,*[2] which bears much reference to these words which God spoke in Job: *Will the eagle mount up and set her feet in high places? she abideth among rocks, and dwelleth among craggy flints and stormy hills where there is no access. From*

[1] Cant. iii. 7 [2] Luke xvii. [3] Job. xxxix. 27

thence she looketh for prey and her eyes behold afar off the carcass.[1] The Saints understand by the body round which the eagles assemble, that of Our Lord. The word *dead body (cadaver,)* says St. Gregory, explaining this passage of Job, can be applied to the body of Jesus Christ which became a corpse by death. Explaining the above passage of the Gospel, St. Ambrose says: We cannot doubt that there is here question of the Body of Jesus Christ, since it is this Body Joseph of Arimethea obtained of Pilate. The eagles, according to the interpretation of the same Saints, signify just souls, which, like eagles, soar above earthly things, winging their flight heavenward, for in Heaven they habitually dwell by their thoughts and affections. These truly royal eagles have a wonderful instinct to discover the Body of Jesus Christ, and when they know where it is, they fly there directly. The glorious Virgin, the other holy women and the Apostles, are they not like eagles around the tomb of Our Lord? But above all, Magdalen who, unfurling the great wings of her love and all her affections, hovers around this tomb, powerless to attempt to quit it. Let us learn from her example, to hover like young eagles around the Blessed Sacrament, in which we shall find Our Lord Himself, living and glorious. What we daily see in nature, says St. Jerome, ought to teach us what we should do with regard to the Blessed Sacrament. It is said that eagles and vultures smell dead bodies at a great distance, and pounce upon them with incredible velocity. If these birds, though deprived of judgment, have a natural instinct which enables them to smell their prey afar off, ought not we who are Christians run and fly to Our Lord, as the truest and most delicious prey of our souls.[2]

II. This was the practice of the Saints who ardently loved Our Lord; not being able to posses Him here be-

[1] Job xxxix. 29. [2] S. *Hieron.* in cap. 24 *Matthæi.*

low as he is in Heaven, they at least, as far as they could, and as far as God permitted, kept company with our Lord in the Eucharistic Sacrament. Some remained nearly always in the church in order not to lose sight of this dear object of their love : they made the holy temple their cell and their chamber. A faithful spouse loves to be where her bridegroom is, a friend loves to dwell in the same apartment with his friend, and though they converse not, and that each applies to his particular work, nevertheless this physical presence influences their minds, makes them labor with more cheerfulness and peace, and gives them a certain joy which they could not lose without pain : thus the Saints took pleasure in performing their actions before the Most Holy Sacrament, in presence of Our Lord.

St Francis Xavier, Apostle of the Indies, lodged as near the church as he could, and slept in the sacristy ; in the middle of the night he would come before the Blessed Sacrament to adore Jesus Christ. If after having prayed a long time, weariness and sleep overpowered him, he sank on the steps of the altar and took a little repose. What repose!

St. Matilda, Queen of Germany and mother of the Emperor, Otho the Great, had a residence near the church, to which she retired every evening, and when she had taken a little sleep, she rose and went to pass the night before Our Lord in prayer and other holy exercises.

The Marchioness of Feria having become a widow at the age of twenty-four years, bade adieu to the grandeurs and pleasures of the world, and took the habit of a Poor Clare at Montilla, under the name of Sister Anne of the Cross. She dwelt in a cell which had a little window overlooking the high altar where the Blessed Sacrament reposed : there this pious lady employed nearly all her time before her Sovereign Lord ; she contemplated this Divine

Saviour under the eucharistic veils, burning with a holy impatience to contemplate Him face to face in Heaven.

Maria Diaz who lived at Avila in St. Teresa's time, in high repute for sanctity, obtained of the Bishop permission to lodge in the tribune of the Church that she might be continnally in the presence of the Holy Eucharist ; her faith was so lively that she saw Our Lord present as if she had seen Him with the eyes of the body. Here she remained several years without ever going out except to confess and communicate. This custom of remaining incessantly before the Blessed Sacrament acquired her such great lights and such high sentiments of heavenly things, especially of the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist which she called her neighbor, that her visitors, however learned they might be, were amazed to hear a poor villager say such sublime things, and explain so clearly the most obscure mysteries of our faith.

The Venerable Brother Francis of the Infant Jesus, of the Order of Discalced Carmelites, had an extraordinary devotion to the Blessed Sacrament ; he remained before it with such profound reverence that he adored Our Lord not in the obscurity of faith, but in the clearness of vision. When he passed near a Church in which the Blessed Sacrament reposed, he always entered to pray, and he well remarked on this subject : "A friend does not pass before the door of his friend, a servant before his master, without at least saying a word and saluting him." When he had leisure he made a long visit, and when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed in a Church, he remained on his knees immovable nearly all day, occupied only in enjoying his sovereign happiness.

The generous martyr of Jesus Christ, Father James Sales of our Society, among his other virtues had a particular devotion to the Holy Sacrament which led him to speak often of it ; he let no day pass without visiting it

several times. When called to speak to any one, when he returned to his room, when he went into the house, in passing and re-passing before the gallery whence he could see the tabernacle where Our Lord reposed, he entered each time to offer Him the homage of his heart: it was even remarked that he scarcely ever passed an hour without visiting the Blessed Sacrament. It was to sustain the truth of the real presence of Jesus Christ in this mystery, that after a long and learned dispute, he was slain at Aubenas by the heretics with a blow of an arquebuse.

The holy father, Balthasar Alvarez, burned with so ardent a love for the Blessed Sacrament that he always fixed his eyes on it when before it, and no exterior thing could turn his gaze from this sweet object; for with the eyes of faith, he recognized beneath the veil of the accidents, the delicious food of his soul with more certainty than if he saw it with his corporal eyes. As the Apostles regarded their Divine Master ascending into Heaven, though He was soon hidden in the clouds, and contemplated Him in Heaven, where they knew He was, veiled to them, so this holy personage, accustomed to see Our Lord in the lights of contemplation, could not withdraw his gaze from the Sacred Host which he knew to be the veil that covered him. He often visited the Blessed Sacrament in the Church, making there long prayers, and sometimes passing whole nights in this exercise. He was sensibly grieved to see the palaces full and the churches empty, and that so few came to treat with Our Lord on the throne of His love which He established on earth for that end. He regarded it as a great privilege for religious to possess Him in their houses where they could visit Him day and night with more facility than seculars could. Blessed John Berchmans, another holy Religious of the same Company, who died at Rome 1621, visited the Blessed Sacrament five or six times a day, so great was the love he bore it.

Let us follow these examples, let us adopt the happy custom of visiting Our Lord in this adorable mystery as often as we can. Formerly it was the great devotion of Christians to visit, in the Holy Land, the places where Our Lord operated our salvation : let ours be to visit Our Lord in His churches, St. Paulinus advises : If we travel so far and encounter so many dangers merely to see the country in which Our Lord lived, in which he walked, and suffered death ; if we regard it as a great favor to possess a little splinter of the wood of the Cross ; if the crib wherein He was laid, the river in which He was baptized, the garden where He prayed, the prætorium where He was judged, the pillar to which He was bound, the thorns with which He was crowned, the wood to which He was nailed, the rock in which He was buried, the mount whence He ascended into Heaven, are in such great veneration among Christians because of the relation they once had with Our Lord, with what ardor ought we not now visit the Blessed Sacrament to find there what is far more admirable, Our Lord Himself in person.[1] With what force ought He not attract us since he is so near us, and since we can reach Him without encountering the perils of a voyage to Judea ! Should not this Divine Lover attract and unite us to Himself though our hearts were heavier than iron.

In conclusion, I add part of a letter written by a Religious to whom God gave great knowledge of the mystery of the Eucharist, and great favors through its means : "Our Lord," says she, "did me many favors through the Holy Sacrament. I should wish to be able to tell you for the glory of this adorable mystery all I have seen and received : I have seen that all my good and the grace of my conversion have come only from it, and I belong to the glory of God in the Blessed Sacrament to which I have entirely given and consecrated myself by vow. Good God ! if I

[1] S. *Paulinus. Epist.* 34 ad *Macarium.*

could tell all! But I cannot, it is an abyss in which I am lost, so great is the glory Our God wishes to communicate through the merit of the Blessed Sacrament preferably to all other means. I see a numberless multitude of graces, benedictions and helps, which are not given because we do not address Our Lord in this mystery ; I see in Him an intense desire to communicate Himself, to glorify Himself in it abundantly, with all the Holy Trinity. O sacred mystery, how great Thou art! O Divine Host, what wonders dost Thou contain! It is in this Host that Our Lord makes known His power with greatest splendor, since it is an epitome of all His wonders : all is there, we need seek nothing elsewhere; let us remain forever before the Blessed Sacrament, let us cousume ourselves before it : we need not envy the Blessed spirits who possess Our Lord in Heaven : we have Him here below as really in the Holy Eucharist ; He then manifests more, it seems to me, the wonders, the glory of His power and His love, which fills Heaven with astonishment, and ravishes men for whom He works these prodigies. I would wish to build millions of houses on earth filled with millions of men and women consecrated to honor the Holy Sacrament to the end of the world. Do what you can, and if you erect any house, procure that it be dedicated to the glory of the Holy Sacrament ; make all with whom you converse consecrate themseves to the Blessed Sacrament. Pardon me if I speak thus ; but I forget myself when I name the Blessed Sacrament, to which I have so many obligations, and which so greatly deserves to be loved ; I know not what to do ; it seems to me that you will solace me."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LOVE OF OUR LORD MAKES US LOVE EVERYTHING THAT REFERS TO HIM.

I. Everything—II. His images—II. His feasts—IV. His holy name.

I. The wise teach, and experience shows, that love not only inclines the will of Him that loves to have good will towards the object beloved, but also to everything that appertains to this subject. He who loves any one, says Platinus, loves all that has alliance with him : so, you look with affection on, and you cherish the children of, a father whom you love. Theodoret in giving an account of the reasons which led Peter of Galatia, a holy anchorite, to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, says that it was love which impelled him to do this ; for, added he, it is the property of those who love to behold with joy not only the person beloved, but his house, his dress, and even his shoes. The Spouse in the Canticles says that the very shadow of her Beloved is agreeable to her. The Jews during their captivity had so great a love for the Temple which had been destroyed, that they loved even its ruins and ashes, preferring them to the superb palaces of Babylon. Hence David says : The stones of Sion have pleased Thy servants. (Ps.)

II. In like manner, all who truly love Our Lord love everything that refers to Him, without any exception. They love His images and prefer them to all others, because they represent Him. "It is a great consolation to see the pictures of our amiable Saviour whom we love," says St. Teresa : "I should wish our eyes could follow them every where." And in what could we employ our eyes more deliciously than in gazing on the image of Him who has loved us with so much love ?

III. Farther, he who loves Jesus Christ loves His feasts

and celebrates them with particular devotion, because he knows these feasts procure Him new honor and new joys, since they recall the remembrance of His combats, His victories, His virtues and His mysteries. In celebrating them devoutly, man testifies the veneration he has for His triumphs ; he puts himself in a state to receive the fruits of them and to apply to himself their merits. Jesus Christ takes a singular pleasure in seeing us enter into the spirit of His festivals, first, because thereby He is better known and loved, and secondly, for our own advantage.

To celebrate worthily these feasts we must prepare some days beforehand, by reading and attentively considering the mysteries to be celebrated ; afterwards producing acts of faith, admiration, etc., exciting ourselves to the practice of virtues, and chiefly of those exemplified by Our Lord in the mystery which is the object of the solemnity. In the sorrowful mysteries we must penetrate the heart with their bitterness ; in the joyful mysteries we must excite sentiments of sweet joy, and in the one and the other form corresponding acts in order to arouse these sentiments. In the dolorous mysteries we must firmly believe that it is we who have caused the sorrows Jesus endured, excite sentiments of contrition, ask pardon of our sins, humble ourselves, form resolutions for the future, and add to all these acts some corporal penance. In the joyful mysteries, we must deliver ourselves with holy delight to acts of complacency, jubilation, praise, hope, thanksgiving, beseeching Our Lord to give us the virtues He practiced in the particular mystery celebrated, and form a sincere purpose to imitate them. We must entertain ourselves with the same thoughts during the days which follow the feast.

IV. We must love His Holy Name, Jesus, the greatest of all names. Those, says St. Chrysostom, who are seized with great love cherish the names of those they love, they are inflamed when they hear them pronounced : hence, in

addressing the people of Antioch, this Saint was careful to speak to them of St. Miletus whom they passionately loved. Since we love Our Lord we ought to love His Name, unlike the perfidious Jews who, transported with hatred against this sacred Name, blot it out when they read the Old Testament, saying that this Name ought to be effaced from the memory of man. O God forbid! rather let this Sacred Name be engraven with the chisel of love in the hearts and memories of all men!

St. Julian, anchorite, and St. Francis, burned with love in reading it and hearing it pronounced. The first, as St. Ephrem relates, effaced it from all books in which he saw it, by the abundance of his tears. St. Bonaventure recounts of St. Francis that when he pronounced or heard the Sacred Name of Jesus, his heart was so penetrated, and his soul so ravished with love, that his interior sentiments appeared exteriorly as if he had honey on his tongue, and that his ears were struck with excellent music. St. Bernardine, of Sienna, preached this Divine Name in towns and villages, and always with incredible ardor : at the end of his sermons he showed it to the people written on a tablet in large golden letters, and crowned with rays ; he then knelt down and adored it with sentiments of great devotion. It may be that this holy priest imbibed such extraordinary affection for this venerable Name from his virtuous Aunt, Barthélemie, who reared him, and who after the death of her husband entered the Order of St. Austin, where she lived several years in great austerity. When this holy woman heard preachers pronounce the Name of Jesus, she was so touched that she could not restrain herself, and she repeated it several times with all the signs, and movements of extraordinary affection. She was certainly very remarkable for her wisdom and prudence, yet she seemed sometimes beside herself at the bare remembrance of this Holy Name, which she had always in

her heart and on her lips. What shall we say of the glorious martyr St. Ignatius, who in the midst of the torments and sufferings by which the Emperor essayed to shake his constancy, ceased not to pronounce this sacred Name? To those who inquired why he always spoke the same words, he said: I carry this Name engraven on my heart, this is why I cannot cease to repeat it That was true; after his death the words *Jesus Christus* were found engraven on his heart in letters of gold. But the Apostle St. Paul surpasses on this point all others as he surpassed them in the strength of his love for Our Lord; in his fourteen epistles we find the name of Jesus two hundred and nineteen times, and that of Christ four hundred and one times.

The Saints had reason to love the Name of Jesus so ardently: it is the Name of Our Lord; that is enough to attract to it the affection of loving souls, but it is still further for us a source of a thousand blessings. *Thy name is as oil spread out*, says the Spouse. "O well beloved Name," cries out St. Bernard, O oil, poured out, and poured everywhere! whence comest Thou? From Heaven to Judea, from Judea to the whole universe; hence the Church everywhere exclaims: *Thy name is as oil poured out.* And this oil is poured out in such a manner that it bedews not only Heaven and earth, but pierces even to hell; for the blessed in Heaven, men on earth, the souls in purgatory and even the damned in hell bend the knee, as the Apostle says in hearing the holy and adorable Name of Jesus pronounced, and all say: *Thy Name is as oil poured out.* Oil gives light, it nourishes, it fortifies; it is at once light, food and medicine. The Holy Name of Jesus produces all these effects: announced by preaching, it enlightens the mind, and, as an immense torch lit in the midst of the world, it diffuses its light over all the nations of the earth. It is a delicious food: do you not experience new vigor

whenever you recall it? does it not nourish in some manner the soul that thinks of it? What is better than this sacred Name to raise the dejected mind, to give new strength, to make virtues bud forth, to inflame chaste affections? All nourishment is dry that is not moistened by this oil; all is insipid if not seasoned with this salt; whatever you write satisfies me not unless I read the Name of Jesus in your writings; all your conferences please me not, if Jesus be not named in them. The Name of Jesus is honey in the mouth, melody to the ear, joy to the heart. It is a remedy: which of us is so sad that the Name of Jesus pronounced in the heart and passing thence to the lips, will not rejoice the soul, dissipate its darkness, and restore its serenity? Is any one in danger? Is he attacked by his enemy, the demon? Let him invoke this salutary and powerful Name and he will immediately be aided; his enemies will be put to flight, and all their efforts be made vain.[1] Behold what the devout St. Bernard says of the sacred Name of Jesus. The Hebrews would persuade us that Moses put to death the Egyptian that maltreated the Israelite, not with a sword but with the letters of the Name of God which he put forward against him; and that he afterwards wrought his great prodigies with a memorable rod which derived its power from the Name of God that was written upon it. We are not obliged to believe all this, but experience will not give us room to doubt that signal victories are gained over the world and the devil, by the sole Name of Jesus. Thus to choose one example among a thousand: the holy anchorite Abraham used only this Name to dissipate all temptations and illusions, and to put all demons to flight. He was accustomed to say, as St. Epraim relates: The Name of my Lord and Saviour whom I love and whom I have

[1] Serm. 152 in Cant.

always loved, is an impenetrable wall which shields me from all the attacks of the devil.

Hence we ought to love and cherish this Divine Name, to pronounce it often, and always with faith, respect, devotion and love, beseeching Our Lord that He would effect in us what that Name signifies. The venerable Father Faber, first companion of St. Ignatius, had in this point a practice worthy of imitation : he had so great a respect for the holy Name of Jesus that he never pronounced it carelessly, but always with devout and tender attention ; he asked the Eternal Father that in consideration of this adorable Name He would deign to cast the eye of His mercy on those still on earth, or on the souls in purgation that had need of His help. He besought Him to be mindful of all the merits of His Son, of the many desires His immense charity conceived for the salvation and spiritual advancement of men while he still lived on earth.

SECTION I.

CONTINUATION.

I. His words.—II. His Holy Mother.—III. All the Saints.

I. The love of Our Lord makes him who is seized with it in a lively manner, love with ardor all the words which have issued from His divine mouth, not only because they are true, and teach a holy and celestial doctrine, but chiefly because they have come from Him : it is for this motive above all that he loves and honors them. Though all the proclamations the king makes merit respect and obedience, it is still certain that those which proceed directly from his own mouth have a splendor and majesty which the others have not, and which renders them more agreeable, more worthy of high esteem and profound respect. All that the Son of God, the first truth, announced to us

by His prophets and other organs, ought to be received with great love and profound respect; but we owe still more love and respect to what He deigns to say to us by Himself. Of all the books of the Holy Bible, the four Gospels are those which we should cherish most. The Gospel surpasses all the authorities contained in the Holy Scriptures, says St. Augustine. It is our most precious riches, says St. Basil, it contains the accomplishment of the other Scriptures. The words of the Holy Gospel emanate immediately from the mouth of the Incarnate Wisdom, they are words of life and maxims of the most sublime of sciences: in the other holy books, those who speak are in a manner only servants, in the Gospel it is the Master who teaches: here only the stars shine, there it is the sun which enlightens.

It is in this spirit that the Saints have always loved this divine Book in a particular manner, and we may truly say that their writings are only explanations of the Gospel, as their lives have been only the Gospel exemplified. St. Barnabas, Apostle, carried always suspended from his neck and on his breast the Gospel of St. Matthew, which he transcribed himself; he desired even that it should be laid with him in the tomb. St. Epiphanius had continually the book of the Gospels in his hand or on his bosom; he read it incessantly, even on sea in the midst of the tempest, and he placed it on his breast the moment he expired. St. Augustine held it in his hands in all times and places, even when he took a little recreation. St. Cecilia, who so ardently loved the Son of God, was accustomed to place the Gospel on her heart as an epithalamium of love. Another holy virgin kissed it tenderly and respectfully thousands of times. St. Theophila, a virgin of high birth and singular beauty, carried it always in her bosom. Having been led to an infamous place, in the persecution of Diocletian, to destroy her honor and her faith, she drew

out this book and commenced to read it: her heavenly Spouse sent an angel under the figure of a young man of great beauty to defend her and preserve her purity in this dangerous place. The pious Emperor, Theodosius the Younger, had so great a respect and love for the holy Gospels that he wrote them all with his own hand in letters of gold, and in an elegant manner. And in the Councils, with what respect and veneration were they preserved! They were placed in the midst of the assembly on a royal throne and under a dais, all the Fathers honored and venerated them as the Son of God, whose place they held.

Doubtless it is with great reason that the Fathers of the Councils acted in this manner, and the soul that sincerely loves Our Lord will have no difficulty in believing and imitating them. Let us imitate them through a motive of love, and in the perfection of this motive ; let us have the highest esteem for all the words of Our Lord ; let us love and honor the holy Gospel more than all other books, and let us learn by rote as much of it as we can. Pliny the Younger relates that his wife, full of love for him, read his harangues and learned them by heart ; that she sang to the lute the verses he composed, no master having instructed her, but love, the best of all masters. Alphonso, King of Arragon, being dangerously ill and given over by the physicians, took such pleasure in the history of Quintius Curtius, that the bare reading of this book restored him to health. Let us take pleasure in reading and repeating the words of Our Lord, the sacred oracles that have come from His adorable mouth. Let us draw in this divine book our designs and resolutions, our exercises and the rules of our conduct ; let this be the torch which enlightens us and the guide which conducts us. St. Francis Borgia, third General of our Society, when a secular and viceroy of Catalonia, kept usually about him a New Testament which he read often : in reading it his heart was inflamed

with a burning love for Jesus Christ, and from it he received the precious seed of the perfect contempt which he afterwards had for the grandeurs of the world. But what we read of the Abbot Bisarion is still more wonderful. The whole riches of this pious man consisted of a robe, a little mantle and the book of the Gospels, which he always had under his arm ; but this was too much for one who so loved poverty and who so burned with fraternal charity : hence, seeing one day a corpse without a shroud he buried it in his mantle ; remarking a poor man almost nude, he gave him his robe, and lived despoiled of everything but his book. A lord who knew him passed by, and astonished to find him in this state, asked him who had so stripped him, The Saïnt drawing the Gospel from under his arm said : Behold what has despoiled me. But the book did not rest long with him, for seeing a poor man in great necessity he sold it and gave him the price of it. His disciple Dulas perceiving that he had not the book, asked him with some emotion what he had done with it. Be not sad, my brother, if I have it no longer, said the holy man very graciously, to obey it I have sold it, for it was always saying to me : *Sell what thou hast and give to the poor.*

II. He who loves Our Lord has also a great love for the Holy Virgin Mary, because she is His Mother, and by consequence the person most closely allied to Him. He loves her because she conceived Him, brought Him forth, nursed Him, fed Him—because Jesus Christ loves her infinitely more than all other creatures together ; as much because she is the most amiable, on account of the sovereign perfections of nature, grace and glory with which she is adorned, and which elevate her incomparably above all creatures, as because she is His Mother. She has given Him His humanity, and rendered Him all the duty and assistance in her power. Since Our Lord loves and honors

His Mother more than all the rest of the world, the perfect lover of Our Lord who adopts all His sentiments and affections does the same. And, in effect, what wise, loving spouse would not love the mother of her husband, who has given him being, and placed in the world the object of that spouse's love? St. Bonaventure said that St. Francis had an intense love for Mary, because she had made the Lord of all Majesty our brother, and because through her we have obtained mercy.

It is important to remark on this point that whoever wishes to advance with great strides in the love of Our Lord, should cultivate a particular devotion to Mary, and often ask of her this great grace. She will grant it without doubt, since she is all-powerful before Him, and since the greatest service we can do her, and the most sensible pleasure we can cause her, consists in loving her son. Do we not see that all mothers naturally desire that their children should be known, loved and cherished; that they rejoice when this desire is fulfilled, and that often they are happier in seeing their children loved than in being loved themselves? As Mary is the most tender and excellent of all mothers, she ardently desires that her Son should be loved, and loved incomparably more than she herself is loved; and she experiences an indescribable joy in all the love and honor rendered to Him. The honor of the Son is the honor of the Mother.

III. He who loves Our Lord loves all the Saints, all the elect, whether angels or men, as much because Our Lord loves and honors them as because they will one day be the spoils of His victories, the objects of His complacency, the trumpet of His praises, the eternal instruments of His glory and service. Finally, he loves all men with sincere love; but as this love of the neighbor is of great importance, and includes several points necessary for advancement in divine love, we will speak of it at some length.

CHAPTER XIV.

FRATERNAL CHARITY—ITS EXCELLENCE.

I. Its source in the love of God.—II. Four ways of loving our neighbor.—III. Four ways of observing the commandment of Our Lord.—IV. It is the mark of a Christian.—V. The mark of predestination.

Designing to treat of fraternal charity, we know no better way to commence than by speaking of its excellence, because if we consider this attentively, it will be a powerful motive to excite us to the practice of this virtue.

I. I say, first, following the doctrine of St. Thomas and all theologians, that the love of the neighbor takes its source in the love of God. It is the same movement of charity that produces the love of God and the love of our neighbor; these two loves tend to the same end, for it is always in consideration of God that one loves God and the neighbor. As, then, the neighbor is loved not for his own sake, but for God's sake, it is clear that in this love God alone is loved for Himself, according to the maxim of Aristotle, who says that when one does a thing with reference to another, there is properly only one act, and not two. St. Gregory the Great says excellently well on the same subject: "The love of God and the love of our neighbor are two parts which compose one whole, two links which form but one chain, two acts of one virtue, two different actions which proceed from charity as their source; two manners of meriting before God, one of which is not found without the other." Let us add that they are two flames of the same fire, two streams which flow from the same source, two branches from the same trunk, twins of the same mother.

II. But to comprehend all this we must remark that we can love our neighbor in four good and laudable ways,

three of which refer to God : the first is to love him because he is made for the service of God, whom he glorifies by his virtues and good works, and to whom he is useful in some manner, for the same principle which makes us love the end excites us to love the means that conducts to it : thus when we love our friend we love his slave because he is useful to him ; if we profess to love him we ought to desire his good ; all that can procure this ought to be agreeable to us. The second manner of loving our neighbor is to love him because he is the image of God, because he shares in His excellence, and by consequence God finds Himself in him : when we love any one we love him wherever we see him, we cherish his children because he is in them, and, like his portraits, they represent him to our eyes. The third manner is to love him because God loves him infinitely ; for love, as we have frequently said, changes the lover into the beloved, and makes him adopt his affections and sentiments. The fourth manner is to love the neighbor precisely because of the natural and supernatural qualities which render him worthy of our love. The three first modes of loving our neighbor are the fruits and effects of the theological virtue of charity, because they have God in view, and by them we love God in the neighbor. The fourth manner of loving our neighbor comes not from so noble a source, for by the theological virtue of charity, says the Angelic Doctor, we love only God in our neighbor, but this manner flows from a moral virtue which is called friendship.

We must deduce hence a certain and infallible conclusion : it is that he who loves God always loves his neighbor ; that the fire of charity, in burning our hearts with the love of Our Lord, extends its flames to men ; that one of these loves exists not without the other ; that they are always and everywhere inseparable. So, St. John says, in his first Epistle : *If any one says he loves God, and yet hates*

his brother, he is a liar.[1] And not only is the love of God the source of the love of our neighbor, it is also its measure, as the love of the neighbor is the sign to distinguish what degree of divine love we possess. These two loves are like the celebrated twins which were born the same day, died the same day, experienced the same passions, were sad or joyful, sound or healthy, at the same time ; and like the two rivers, Nile and Inope, which grow and decrease the same day and the same hour. St. Catherine of Genoa said that the surest means to know how much we love God is to see how much we love the neighbor. St. Dorotheus illustrated this subject by the following beautiful comparison : " The nearer lines drawn from the circumference approach the centre of a circle, the nearer they approach to each other ; the more they recede from the centre, the more they separate from each other : similar is the nature of charity—the more we are united to God by love, the more we are united to one another, and the less love we have for God the less we have for one another. And effectively, as two branches springing from the same stem must grow at the same time, because nourished with the same sap, so the love of God and the love of the neighbor must increase together, because both are animated with the same spirit.

III. I say, in the second place, that fraternal charity is a divine command, of which these are the terms : *I command you to love one another.*[2] I give you this as a precept which obliges you, and not as a counsel, the observance of which is left to your choice. What renders this commandment extremely commendable is : 1. That it bears on the sweetest and most agreeable of all things, love ; hence St. Bernard called it a gentle ordinance, a precept full of suavity. 2. Our Lord reiterated this command three times in the same discourse, which He did, says St. Austin, to

[1] iv. 20. [2] Joan. xiii. 34.

recommend it the more. 3. The time when he gave it: it was when He was about to die, in the mysterious sermon of the cenacle, of which a great part was employed to excite in various ways, and by the most tender and affectionate words, His disciples to this mutual love. Weighing leisurely all these circumstances, St. Austin says: If a sick man on the point of expiring rallies his remaining strength, calls his heirs to beseech them earnestly to do something, he gives evident testimony that this thing is extremely dear to him: so Our Lord, when about to suffer death, admonished and urged His disciples in the matter of fraternal love, expressly commanding them to love one another, thereby showing how greatly He had at heart this reciprocal love, and how ardently He desired the execution of this precept. 4. Jesus Christ calls this a *new commandment: I give you a new commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.* He calls it new, though it had been given to the Jews, but as it had fallen into disuetude, and seemed entirely forgotten among them, He gives it anew, restores it in all its perfection, and establishes it as the foundation of the new law, which is a law of love. He calls it *new*, that is to say, according to the language of Scripture, excellent, because it commands the most noble and perfect of all virtues, since this precept unites us all to God and to each other, and it is the root of all the commandments, as said St. Gregory, who had learned this from St Paul: *The whole law is contained in one word: You shall love your neighbor as yourself;*[1] he who does this fulfils the whole law. Jesus Christ calls this precept new, because in the old law one was bound only to love his neighbor as he loved himself; but the commandment of the new law obliges us to go farther, and to love our neighbor more than ourselves: 1, since we have for this great and new commandment an admirable and

[1] Galat. v. 14.

new model, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has loved us incomparably more than Himself ; 2, since we fulfil it in a new spirit, the spirit of Christianity, which is a spirit of love.

In fine, Jesus Christ calls this command his own : *This is My commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.*[1] But why does He call it *His* commandment? Are not the other commandments also His? Yes, certainly ; but He calls this His by excellence, to show that He loved it with special affection, that He gave it as the principal, that He preferred it to all the others. A father chooses one of his children, and embracing him says : This is my son ; not that he disowns the others, but he desires to show by this particular manner of *speaking to him*, that he loves him better than all the others. More, Our Lord particularly calls this commandment His own because He practiced this virtue with peculiar excellence ; for the humility, obedience, patience and other virtues He practiced, were only effects of the love He bore to men, and sparks from the flames of His infinite charity ; and even in this command, He practiced excellently the love He ordained and gave us an excellent token of the perfect love He bore us, because in commanding this mutual charity He enjoined that each in particular should love all men, and that all men should love each in particular. By this sweet law He gives to each of us an innumerable multitude of friends, and consequently of protectors, consolers and providers. Certainly, he who is loved by all is aided and consoled by all, and can want nothing, Sweet and loving law! divine precept which splendidly manifests the admirable perfections of the Christian law, and the inestimable happiness of Christians, provided they are faithful to it!

IV. I say in the third place, that fraternal charity is the character of the Christian, the mark by which he is dis-

[1] John xv. 12.

tinguished. *By this shall all men know you to be My disciples, if you have love one for another.*[1] We learn from this that mutual charity is the sign of the Christian. The children of Seleucus when they were born, were marked on the breast with the figure of an anchor, as a token of their nobility ; those of Pithon of Nisibus with that of a battle-axe ; the mark of a Christian is to love his neighbor. It is the first and chief mark to distinguish the true Christian from the false ; he who is not signed with this seal is only the phantom of a Christian. St. Austin, explaining these words of Jesus Christ : *By this* shall all men know you to be My disciples, if *you love one another*, says : Those who are not my disciples share with you My other gifts not only of nature, life, the senses, reason, but also the gift of tongues, the Sacraments as Baptism, in which heretics participate, the gift of prophecy like Balaam and Caiphas ; knowledge and faith as sinners, but because they have not charity, they are only sounding brass, or rather they are nothing. It is not then by these gifts which the impious may share that you are known to be My disciples, but by the love you have one for another. O Spouse of Christ, fairest among women! how well is it said in the Canticle of Canticles, thy own love-song, that *charity makes thy delights!* It is charity that hinders thee from losing thy soul with the impious, it is charity that secures thy salvation.

V. We may go farther and say, that charity is not only the distinctive mark of Christians, but also the certain pledge of their predestination *It is in this*, says St. John, that is, in charity, that we know who are the children of God and the *children of the devil* ;[2] they are classed with the elect or the reprobate, according as they love, or do not love their neighbor. *By this we know* that we have passed from death to life, if *we love the brethren.* He who

[1] John xiii. 35. [2] 1 John iii.

loveth not abideth in death. This made St. Austin say: Charity alone establishes the difference between the children of God and the children of the devil; all are baptized, all make on their forehead the sign of the Cross, all come to the Church, all sing the *alleluia;* it is not by these marks that the children of God are distinguished, but by the charity and holy affection they bear each other, The reason of this is clear: God loves us and the devil hates us, consequently the love of men is the true spirit of God, and hatred the spirit of the devil. St. John partially gives this reason in his inflamed epistle: My beloved, let us love one another, for charity is of God, and whoever loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He who doth not love knoweth not God, *for God is charity.* If we love one another God abideth in us, and His love is perfect in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us: because He hath given us of His spirit.[1]

This being so, it is for us to imprint these truths profoundly on our hearts, and to exercise fraternal charity as perfectly as we possibly can. Before all things, says St. Peter, have a constant mutual charity; above all things, says St. Paul, clothe yourself with charity, which is the bond of perfection. The one says *before all*, the other *above all*, to show us that we must prefer charity to everything. St. John, unable because of his great age to preach long sermons to the faithful, contented himself with repeating these words: My little children, love one another. His disciples, wearied with the constant repetition of these words, asked him why he said the same thing always; and he gave an answer worthy of St. John, says St. Jerome, worthy of the beloved disciple, who in resting his head on the bosom of the Incarnate Wisdom drew, as from its source, a knowledge of the immense necessity and importance of fraternal charity: I give you no other precept

[1] John iv. 7, and 12, 13.

than that you love one another, because it is the commandment of Our Lord ; if you do this, it is enough ; whoever accomplishes this precept, accomplishes all. Let us then love our neighbor, but let us love him for the reasons we have given ; let us see in him only God and His interests ; let us love men because they are His creatures, His work and His most beautiful work, because they conduce to His honor and glory ; because they are His precious spoils, His palms, His laurels, because He loves them, because they are His images. When we tenderly love any one, if we cannot enjoy his presence we procure his portrait which we cherish, and consider, and affectionately preserve. And since the devil, as St. Basil says, exercises his rage against men because they are images of God, not being able to exercise it against God, whom he hates still more, like a tigress which being unable to revenge herself on the hunter who has ensnared her little ones, tears his image which is designedly left in her way ; the soul that truly loves God, and that in virtue of this love wishes to do Him good, seeing her inability to satisfy this desire because God has no need of anything, satisfies it in a manner on man His image, by loving him, by assisting him with all his strength. Behold in what consists the true spirit of Christianity, the soul of all religion, the principal duty imposed on us : it is necessary to be faithful to it if we wish to have some asurance that we love Our Lord. You say you love Jesus Christ, says St. Austin ; if you love not your brother, how can you love Him whose commandment you despise, a commandment which He has so often and so expressly reiterated, and which He has made the basis of all others? Those who have professed to love Him, and who have been his disciples in effect as in name, keep always profoundly engraved on their hearts charity for the neighbor. This charity shone with such splendor among the first Christians that the very pagans as Tertul-

lian relates, knew them by this sign, and were forced to exclaim with astonishment : Behold how these Christians love one another! how they aid, relieve and sympathize with one another? how they perform towards each other all the offices of perfect friendship.

SECTION I.

WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?—WHAT ORDER OUGHT WE OBSERVE IN THIS LOVE?

I. We ought to love all men.—II. Especially Christians.—III. We ought to love sinners.

You shall love your neighbor, says the commandment of God : if asked who the neighbor is, I answer all men in general, as Our Lord declared in the parable of the Samaritan. What is nearer to man than man! asks St. Austin. We cannot think any one a stranger who has the same nature with us, says the same holy Father. He afterwards develops this idea : "We are all allied by our birth on earth, by the hope we have of being born into Heaven. Let us add to this, that the reasons which oblige us to love our neighbor apply to all, and that by consequence all ought to be the object of our love. We ought to love all men, to carry them all in our hearts, after the example of God who loves them all, of Our Lord who comprehended them all in the design He formed to accomplish our redemption, without excluding any. Thus the Royal Prophet says of the commandment of charity, as St. Ambrose and St. Austin explain : *Thy commandment is exceeding broad*, because it includes in the bowels of perfect charity the whole human race.

II. We ought to love all men whatever their country, religion or rank may be, but we ought to love Christians more, because they are our uterine brothers. The Scripture

calls Benjamin the uterine brother of Joseph ; so Joseph loved him more than all the rest. We are born by creation of the same Father who is God ; behold our birth according to nature ; we are born of the same father and mother, Jesus Christ and the Church, His Spouse, behold our birth by grace. We are all in truth members of this great body which is the world, as Seneca remarks, but we are also members of a mystic and moral body of which Jesus Christ is the Head, and the Holy Ghost the heart ; we are regenerated in the same waters by Baptism, enlightened by the same Sun of Justice, warmed by the fires of the same charity, fed with the same food in the Sacrament of the Eucharist ; we dwell and we combat here below in the same Church Militant and we all hope to repose in the same Heaven, the same triumphant Church, forever. Thus we ought to regard our brother Christians ; with these motives we ought to consider them and love them, and love Our Lord in them. Jesus Christ resides in Christians, his members, says St. Austin ; it must not be imagined that He is only in the Head and not in the members, He is wholly in the Head and wholly in the members ; He is one with them. Formerly, speaking of Saul, who persecuted the Church, He said : *Saul, why dost thou persecute* ME? for Saul pursued Him not in His own person but in His members, that is, the faithful then on earth ; yet He says not : Why dost thou persecute My Saints, My Servants ? nor what had been still more honorable, My brothers, but why dost thou persecute ME, that is to say, My members of whom I am the Head ?

We must with the eyes of faith penetrate exterior appearances and contemplate, honor and love Our Lord in each Christian ; to fulfil the duties of charity in this spirit, recalling the beautiful words of Jesus Christ : As often as you did it to the least of My brethren *you did it to Me.*[1]

[1] Matt. xxv. 40.

Elsewhere St. Austin says on the same subject: If a person kissing you in the face should at the same time tread on your foot, would you not cry out to him: what are you about? you hurt me. You would not say: you hurt my head, since, on the contrary, he embraces your head, but the head would cry to testify to the pain of the wounded member, instead of acknowledging the honor done itself, and say: Leave me, and do not trample me so. If this man should respond: How can I injure you when I cherish and caress you? See you not that what you honor is united to the member you offend, and that by this union pain is communicated from the wounded member to the member you honor, and this feeling of pain makes it forget the honor you do it. The tongue complains and cries: "You hurt me—not, you hurt my foot, but you hurt *me*. Why do you murmur? Who touched you? Who wounded you? Nobody, but how can I be united to a member, and not sympathize in the pain inflicted on it?"[1] In like manner, though Our Lord be glorious and impassable in Heaven, He nevertheless regards as done to Himself whatever His members are made to suffer; hence He said to Saul: Saul, Saul, *why persecutest thou Me?* So that the Church must be regarded as a great body which stretches from earth to Heaven of which the Head is in Heaven, impassable and glorious, that is, Our Lord; and the members, that is to say, all the faithful, are on earth, poor, infirm, subject to many miseries of soul and body. When then the foot, or any other member here on earth, according to the diversity of functions, is offended or wounded, the Head, that is, Our Lord, feels it in Heaven, because of the intimate union that exists between Him and His members; and as this supernatural union formed by grace and faith is much nobler and stronger than that which nature forms by means of the soul, between the head and the feet, Our

[1] Tract. 10 in Joan. 1 Epist.

Lord feels more acutely the pain of His mystic member than the head feels the pain of the foot.

III. We ought to love sinners because they are God's creatures whom He preserves by His power, sustains by His benefits, and has created to enjoy Him eternally ; we ought to love them because Our Lord loves them and wishes that we should love them for His sake. Yet we must love them with discretion and discernment, loving in them their nature which is of God, and not their vices and sins which we ought to hate after the example of David : *Lord, shall I not hate those who hate Thee?* Yes, I *shall hate them with a perfect hatred ;* I hate in them what deserves to be hated, and I love in them what deserves to be loved. If we ought to have affection for sinners, we ought to have still more for the just, since they are incomparably more worthy of it; for besides the qualities common to them with other reasonable creatures, they are also friends, servants and children of God. In a word, we ought to love a man in proportion as he possesses more claims on our love, as he is a more noble and excellent instrument of the glory of God, a more beautiful image of His Divinity, and as he better represents the splendor of His perfections and loves him more. For, as St. Thomas says, since God is the principle of the love we ought to have for our neighbor, the more the neighbor approaches God, the more we ought to love him, the nearer our heart should approach to him. According to this, we ought to love the blessed more than others because they serve, honor and love God perfectly ; they are His living images in whom He depicts His divine perfections with the rays of His glory ; because they are near Him, His intimate friends, and they are inseparably united to Him, by enjoying His beatitude. We ought to love next the souls in purgatory for similar reasons ; and besides the excessive pains they endure, which surpass all that can be suffered in this world, should excite

us to have for them a tender compassion and to assist them. If we should see a friend or neighbor fall into a great fire and in danger of being consumed, should we not regard ourselves as cruel and inhuman if we felt no compassion and made no effort to rescue him? The souls of our fathers, our brothers, our friends are in the flames of purgatory; ought not charity to move us to relieve them, to aid them to quit these fires, since we can easily do so, and since in aiding them we not only deliver them from great sufferings but procure them the greatest of all goods, which they desire with inconceivable ardor, and besides they are holy souls, so dear to God and to us.

Though all we have said be true, yet Our Lord particularly obliged us by His precept of the love of our neighbor, to love men who live on earth whom we ought to regard as the first and principal object of our charity; we ought to love them all without a single exception, whatever be their country and condition, not only our friends and those that do us good, but also our enemies and those who do us harm. But as this love of our enemies has particular difficulties, it will be well to enlarge somewhat upon it.

SECTION II.

WE OUGHT TO LOVE OUR ENEMIES.

I. We are formally commanded to do so.—II. This command is peculiar to Christians.—III. It is the highest degree of charity.—IV. It is a very noble and honorable thing.

I. *You have heard*, says Our Lord to His disciples, *that it hath been said: You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you: Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that persecute and calumniate you.*[1] Behold the terms of this precept. O amiable command-

[1] Matt. v. 43

ment! O ineffable sweetness of the Christian law! Moses was the legislator of the Hebrews, Solon gave laws to the Athenians, Lycurgus to the Spartans, Minos to the Cretans, Numa to the Romans: these, and generally all who have governed States, ordained in their laws sufferings for malefactors; they speak only of seizing them, of stoning them, of putting to death all who do injury to their citizens. But Jesus Christ, our amiable Saviour, our legislator, full of mercy, commands in His divine law only to love and to do good. Do not kill your enemies, says He, do not offend them, do not injure them, but forgive them and love them. It is then with great reason that the law of Jesus Christ is called the law of grace, since it is a law of pardon and reconciliation, not only between God and us, but also between us and our brethren who have offended us.

II. Since Jesus Christ has given us this commandment we ought to receive and obey it; and for this we must be persuaded that it is the property of Christians to love their enemies, and to do good to those from whom they receive evil. We are commanded to love our enemies, says Tertullian, this is a virtue peculiar to us: to love friends is a virtue common to all, but it belongs to Christians alone to love their enemies. Elsewhere the same Father says this beautiful word: The Christian is no one's enemy: a saying which we ought often to repeat that it may be profoundly engraven on our hearts. In this consists the true spirit of the new law which we profess, which is a law of grace and love. When St. James and St. John, indignant against the churlish Samaritans who refused to permit Our Lord to enter their city, and who received with such incivility the honor He wished to do them, asked Our Lord if they would on His part command fire to descend from Heaven, as Elias formerly did, to consume these barbarians, He replied: *You know not of what spirit you are,*[1] nor under

[1] Luke ix. 55.

what law you live : you are now under a law of love not of hatred, of sweetness not of vengeance, of grace not of chastisements. What you allude to was good under the old law and for Elias, but not under the new law, whose spirit, far more sweet and merciful, draws fire from Heaven, not the fire of justice and severity, but the fire of mercy and pardon which inflames the injured person and consumes all his movements of vengeance.

III. We ought to consider the love of enemies, as St. Austin teaches, not only as the highest degree of fraternal charity which is, as we have said, the mark of a Christian, as the most beautiful ornament of the Queen of virtues, as the flame of this noble fire, but also as the greatest and most secure testimony a man can give to prove that he is a true Christian : it is the noblest and most heroic action, that which most elevates the Christian, and in which nature has no part, for it is the pure work of grace, and consequently, the most excellent and meritorious of acts. And according to the remark of St. Thomas, this act is more meritorious than the love we bear our friends though we should love them for the love of God, because nature may easily glide in here ; but it is grace alone, the pure love of God, that can bend our inclinations to love our enemies : this act is then more pure and perfect, because it is not vitiated by any mixture of self-love. When the sun enters an apartment through glass, it truly fills it with light and heat, yet in a less degree than if it entered without any obstacle or medium ; because the obstruction refracts the ray and robs it of some of its force : but if it entered without any obstacle it gives all its light and heat. So, though our love of our friends emanate from the Sun of Justice, yet as it passes through nature, it has not the same force and purity as has love of our enemies. St. Thomas uses the comparison of fire to show the force of the love of our enemies. Fire, says he, is stronger in pro-

portion as it radiates less of its heat ; so charity is most powerful not when it does good to those united to us by the bonds of blood or friendship, or by similarity of disposition, but when it serves those of a different disposition, or those whose ill-will has separated them from us.

IV. We ought also to consider that it is a very honorable thing to love our enemies ; it suits only great souls who have much love for God and great power over themselves, that, more than any other virtue, it renders us worthy of the mercies of Our Lord, who has said : *The measure you have measured to others shall be measured to you again.* This love is very reasonable, for if we had the eyes of the mind well enlightened, we should see the great obligations we show to our enemies, and that they contribute more than we think to our salvation and perfection ; in effect, they are often the cause why we fulfil our duties, that we may give them no reason to accuse us ; we learn by the sentiments we experience when they injure us whether we have patience, meekness and charity, whether nature has still much power over us, whether we have advanced or receded in the ways of virtue. Hence it is said that it is good to have a true friend, and also to have an enemy, because the enemy, though by opposite ways, procures as much good as the friend, to a wise and prudent person who knows how to draw profit from everything. The Abbot S ephen, of whom St. Gregory speaks, had such great lights on this point, and was raised to so high a degree of patience, that he sincerely believed that whoever did him some injury was his particular friend ; he thanked those who spoke unkindly of him, he regarded as great advantages all the losses they caused him to sustain, and he believed that his enemies were his true protectors and defenders. St. Martin, Abbot, went still farther as St. Gregory of Tours. relates ; not only did he pardon his enemies the injuries

they did him, but he showed his gratitude for each injury by making them some present.

SECTION III.

CONTINUATION.—EXAMPLES.

I. Example of God.—II. Of Jesus Christ.—III. Of holy men.—IV. Of holy women.

I. All these reasons, seriously pondered, are sufficient to give us love and good will for those who injure us ; but we will add some examples very proper to excite our hearts powerfully to this. The first is the example of God which Jesus Christ Himself gives us : *Love your enemies . . . . that you may be true children of your Father in Heaven who maketh His sun to shine on the good and the bad, and sendeth His rain upon the just and the unjust.*[1] Admirable example for him who considers the greatness of the God who is offended, the baseness and infamy of those who offend Him, and the quantity and enormity of the offences committed against Him every instant. There is certainly no one in the universe to whom there is nearly so much injury done as to God, and yet He showers innumerable blessings on those who injure Him ; and what ought to touch us deeply is, that He Himself makes the first advances, and seeks their friendship by the preventing graces He sends them. What a perfect model of the love we ought to bear to those who injure us!

II. The second example is that of Jesus Christ Our Lord, whose whole life was a continual exercise of love towards His enemies, and His death a sacrifice to wipe away their sins, and give life to His murderers. He could have revenged Himself on His enemies, says St. Ambrose, but He preferred to immolate Himself for them and save them.

[1] Matt. v. 45.

In the midst of His most violent torments, says St. Peter, He threatened not those who made *Him suffer*,[1] though He could, by a breath of His mouth or a glance of His eye, strike them as with a thunderbolt, and precipitate them into hell. The word he spoke on the Cross was a word, or rather a flame, darted from the fire of that infinite charity with which He was burned and consumed : Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. O word of great patience, of great sweetness, of great love, of ineffable charity, exclaims St. Ambrose ; *Father, forgive them.* He prays for the Jews who were so unworthy of pardon, who had outraged Him by such terrible excesses, who had rejected Him, and who feared not to invoke His Blood upon them. He prayed in the midst of the most cruel sufferings and the most frightful sorrows. If he had prayed for them after His Resurrection when He saw Himself glorious and immortal, and when the abundance of delights in which His soul and body were plunged had effaced all sentiments of His pains, the thing had not been so difficult, nor so wonderful ; but He did it when He had His enemies before His eyes, when their horrible blasphemies struck on His ears, when his mouth was filled with the gall they had given Him to drink, His head transpierced with sharp thorns, His hands and feet nailed to a Cross. Torn with scourges, crowned with thorns, fastened with nails to a gibbet, satiated with opprobrium, He forgets all his sorrows, says St. Bernard, to exclaim : Father, forgive them., for they know not what they do. He calls God His Father, as if to mollify Him by this sweet and tender Name, and to excite him to mercy. This was His first word on the Cross, He pronounced it before He spoke of Himself, of His Holy Mother or of any other, to show how ardently He desired to obtain this pardon ; farther, He asked it absolutely and unconditionally of His Father, who could re-

[1] Peter ii. 23.

fuse Him nothing, and when he prayed for Himself in the Garden of Olives, He submitted entirely to God's good pleasure the object of His petition.

This word of Our Lord, this example which He has left us, has extinguished anger millions of times, removed enmities, stifled resentments without number ; and, as St. Grégory says, it has filled souls with patience, it has made weapons drop from the arms of the revengeful, and forced them to extinguish their resentment in the sweetness of a fraternal embrace. This word led St. Stephen the first martyr, a worthy imitator of His Divine Master, to make with a loud voice, and with all the ardor of charity, this prayer for those who stoned Him : *Lord Jesus, lay not this sin to their charge*, but pardon them. St. Angelbert, Archbishop of Cologne, was attacked during a journey by his enemies who put him to death ; instead of yielding to resentment he sought to obtain their pardon by these words : Father, pardon them. This action was so agreeable to God that He made known by revelation that the soul of the holy Archbishop was carried into Heaven as it left the body, and placed among the martyrs.

III. Who can count the number of those that with heroic courage and hearts truly Christian, have loved their enemies and rendered them good for evil! The multitude is prodigious ; let us choose some of the most signal. Venustian, Governor of Tuscany for the Emperor Maximin, having ordered that the hands of St. Sabinus, Bishop of Spoletto, should be cut off, and put to death his deacons, Exuperance and Marcellus, for confessing the faith, was struck with an acute pain in his eyes as a punishment for his crimes ; he had recourse to the holy Bishop and besought him to give some remedy, if it were possible. The Saint forgetting the cruelty of which he had been the victim, immediately put himself in prayer, and raising, not his hands which he had lost, but his bloody arms, he ob-

tained the cure of the eyes of the body, and still more that of the eyes of the soul, making him know and adore Jesus Christ. It was a common thing with the martyrs to procure corporal and spiritual health for those who inflicted on them frightful torments. St. Gregory relates that the holy Abbot Isaac having received a blow on the face, bore this outrage with invincible patience and sweetness, while the devil by the will of God entered the body of the offender to chastise his audacity; but the Saint added charity to patience, and obtained of God his deliverance. St. Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury, received with unparalelled sweetness the enemies who had thwarted his designs; he seemed even to make more account of their persecutions than of the good offices of his friends; his domestics having complained of this he gave them this beautiful reply: Though they should cut off my arms or tear out my eyes, I would not love them less. What shall we say of the great patriarch of Antioch, St. Melitus? Who can worthily celebrate his virtue? Behold what St. Chrysostom relates of him: His enemies, the Arians, having caused him to be condemned to banishment by the Emperor Valens, the people who were passionately attached to him cried out furiously that they would rather suffer themselves to be torn in pieces than let him depart. The Governor of the city, to execute as gently as possible the order of the prince, went himself to the house of the Bishop, took him into his chariot which the Saint ascended without resistance; but the people who watched incessantly, discovering the ruse, began to stone the Governor, and the Bishop seeing him in imminent danger of being killed, performed an action worthy of the greatness and generosity of his Christian descent: He rose up, embraced the Governor, covered him with his robe and thus saved him from danger. The Saint went into exile, embracing and saving from death him who conducted him thither;

or rather let us say that victorious charity, crowned with laurels, led triumphant, in this chariot, nature and the desire of revenge.

IV. And to show that this perfection of charity, this glory of loving our enemies and doing them good, is found not only among men but also among women, we will select one or two examples from a great number. St. Catherine of Sienna knowing that there was in the hospital a poor woman in great want, whom leprosy had so disfigured that every one held her in abhorrence, went to see her, and offer her services. She visited her every morning and evening, and brought her whatever she required. She considered Jesus Christ in this person, says the pious historian, and served her with much care and reverence. This patient who should have humbled herself on seeing the abasements of the Saint, became proud of the services rendered her : instead of thanking her for all the pains she took for her, she began to persecute her, to say injurious things of her, to mock her, and would reprehend her sharply if she did not do exactly all she desired, or if she visited her a little later than usual, pretending that the services rendered her through pure charity were justly due her. All this bad treatment and ingratitude did not diminish the charity of the Saint, but rather seemed to increase it ; she served her with more affection than ever, seeking to pacify her by gentle words when she was angry, and treating her with as much tenderness as if she were her own mother. She continued her cares till the death of this poor woman, assisted her in her last moments, consoled her, encouraged her ; performed for her the last offices, and laid her in the tomb. Another time one of the Penitents of St. Dominic named Palmerina, conceived through the suggestion of the devil, such a furious hatred and envy against the same Saint, that she could not bear to speak to her or see her ; everywhere, in public and in private,

she attacked her reputation with envenomed words, and showed herself an enemy in every possible way. The Saint vainly strove to gain this wicked soul by humility, meekness and good offices ; she drove Catherine from her house without allowing herself to be moved by any reason whatever, and even on the point of death this miserable creature was obstinate in her hatred. The Saint then presented herself before Our Lord and fervently conjured Him not to allow this soul to perish on her account. "Lord," said she, "shall I, a wretched creature, be the occasion of loss to a soul created to Thy image? Is this the good Thou wilt use me to effect? No doubt my sins have caused the whole, yet I will continue to claim Thy mercy until my Sister sees her error, and Thou savest her soul from death.

This prayer was so effectual that the patient remained three days and three nights in her agony, without having power to die ; at length Our Lord touched her hard heart ; she acknowledged her fault, confessed it with great sorrow, and died shortly after, having received the last sacraments.

Another time, the same Saint undertook to serve a *Sister of Penance* of St. Dominick, called Andrea, who was very ill of a cancer, which gradually gnawed away her whole chest, exhaling so disgusting an odor that it was almost impossible to find any one willing to pay the unhappy creature a friendly visit ; the Saint remained by her bedside continually, she washed the wound, changed the linens, and performed all the offices of a nurse without exhibiting the slightest repugnance. Some time after, the sower of discord inspired this widow with a disgust for the Saint which soon became an inveterate hatred, so that she calumniated her kind nurse in the most shameful manner. Some of the more advanced of the Sisters visited the sick woman to learn whether these reports had any foundation ; she replied what the devil suggested to her : the Sisters having

addressed to Catherine cruel and bitter reproaches, asked how it was possible she could have so fallen away as to lose her virginity. This was to wound the holy virgin in the apple of her eye, yet she continued to serve Andrea with redoubled care and affection. Grieved however at such a terrible calumny, she besought Our Lord to undertake her defence, saying : " My omnipotent Saviour, Thou knowest the delicacy of the reputation of Thy Spouses, and how carefully they should preserve their honor from the slightest reproach ; assist me then, my Lord and my God, for Thou knowest that I am innocent." Her prayer was heard. Our Lord caused her accuser to repent of her sin, to retract her allegations, and to ask pardon of the Saint.

We will conclude with an account of a memorable action which occurred at Gaeta in Italy, some years ago. A young man slew the son of a lady of quality ; the judge learning this, ordered the gates of the city to be closed lest the murderer should escape. The soldiers sought him diligently, and he hid, now in one place, now in another, and used every means to save his life ; but as he saw it was impossible to escape in the extraordinary searches made for him, he went into the house of the murdered man, believing they would never seek him there. At the very same moment, the mother learned that her son was slain, and the name of the murderer. Undismayed by this terrible news, she raised her hands and eyes to Heaven saying in the sentiments of the holy man, Job : The Name of the Lord be blessed ; as He hath pleased so is it done. Learning that the homicide was hidden in her house, this generous and truly Christian woman, far from desiring to revenge herself, removed him to a secret place so that the police should not find him. When all danger was over, she caused him to be brought into her presence, she pardoned him and gave him money to enable him to quit the city lest he should fall into the hands of justice. What

courage! what virtue! O Christian law, law of love, what power Thou hast over those who follow Thee, and to how high a degree of perfection dost Thou elevate them!

SECTION IV.

ADVICE REGARDING INJURIES AND ENEMIES.

I. We must not be too sensible to injuries.—II. We must pardon them. III. Resolutions.—IV. Words of St. Augustine.

Let us then imitate these examples, let us form our sentiments with regard to our enemies and those who injure us, on these beautiful models. But we must add some admonition on this important matter.

I. We ought to strive not to be so sensible to injuries, and not to be easily offended at many little things which may be said and done; but to raise ourselves above all this, to render ourselves so strong that we shall not be easily troubled by the adverse occurrences which cannot be avoided in this life. It is a mark not only of generosity but also of wisdom, to despise injuries and not to permit them to disturb our interior peace. We must as far as possible be independent of them, and neutralize their power of annoying us. A man having struck Cato accidentally, wished to make him satisfaction; but this illustrious personage answered in these remarkable words: I do not remember that you struck me. He had rather not avow the injury than pardon it, says Seneca, who adds: It is peculiar to great courage to contemn injuries; many make the injury worse by seeking to draw vengeance from it. A noble and glorious heart disdains even to mention an injury or notice it; as the mastiff does not seem to hear the barking of a little dog.

To give our souls this temper of steel, and to render them insensible to injuries, we must consider them from a

point of view in which they cannot hurt us. Epictetus wisely said that everything had two sides, of which one is easy to take, and the other difficult: if your brother wrongs you, do not consider the action under the aspect of the wrong he does you, it would pain you to touch it on that side; but consider that he is your brother, that you are both formed of the same flesh and blood, nourished and reared together: from this point of view the action will appear tolerable. Does any one speak ill of you? persecute you? appropriate your goods? Take care, he who thus injures you has two faces, one is hideous, the other beautiful; choose which side to view. He wrongs me, you say, I have given him no reason to treat me in this manner; on the contrary, I have ever sought to oblige him as far as I could. Do not consider this side of the question, otherwise trouble and confusion will fill your mind, anger and revenge will inflame your heart: I except, however, strong and generous souls who have strength enough to fix their eyes on these thorny objects, without experiencing trouble and emotion; but when one is subject to the common weakness, it is much more secure to turn from the dangerous side, and to consider only that he who offends you, is the image of God, a Christian like you, and your brother; that by patiently bearing this injury you do a noble and generous action which is very pleasing to God, and very meritorious for yourself; that it is, as it were, an assurance of your salvation, the mark of your predestination, an infallible disposition to obtain pardon of your sins, because you can then say with confidence: Forgive us our trespasses as *we forgive them who trespass against us.* It is thus we ought to consider our enemies, it is with the eyes of faith that we must regard the evils they do us; it is with a spirit thus prepared that we ought to expect and receive them.

II. When we shall have received some injury which

might reasonably grieve us, we must then, to show ourselves true Christians, sacrifice to God our resentment, and obey Our Lord, who commands us to love our enemies and forgive injuries. St. Gregory of Nazianzen, urged by his friends to take vengeance on some bad persons who crossed him in his good designs, said: This is not, my children, what Our Lord demands of us; it is not what the Gospel teaches; all the vengeance I wish to take on my enemies, all the evil I wish them, is to pray they may be saved. When anger excites you to resent the injuries done you, to render evil for evil, stifle it by the same words, and say: The Gospel gives me far different lessons; Jesus Christ teaches me to act otherwise.

Forgive the offender, because he is your like, and your brother; it is his levity, it is the weakness of age, that caused the offence to be committed, it is passion that blinded him; these reasons render him worthy of your forgiveness. If other reasons render him absolutely unworthy, pardon him for the sake of Jesus Christ, Who daily remits to you greater and more numerous offences, Who asks you to pardon him, Who commands and expects that you will do so. If He came before you and enumerated the benefits He confers on you, the sins He pardons you, could you refuse Him anything? Figure to yourself that He is really before you; view Him with the eyes of the soul while He demands pardon of this injury as a testimony of the love you bear Him. Remember that He loves him whom you hate, and that He redeemed him with His Precious Blood. Consider, says St. Austin, how much the person cost whom you despise; put in the balance on one side the whole universe, and on the other the death of the Son of God, which is the price of His ransom, and you will then see how much you ought to esteem him. How can you hate a man whom God loves so much that He descended from Heaven to earth to become like him, to as-

sume his nature, to render Himself his brother, to labor thirty-three years and afterwards die for him on a Cross? If the servant of your friend injured you and that you were about to strike him, would not your arm be arrested by the thought of him to whom the offender belonged, lest in revenging yourself you insult your friend and lose him? Esau, a wicked man, preserved in his heart hatred and desires of vengeance for his brother Jacob; yet he gave no signs of this, in consideration of his father Isaac; for this reason, he said: If it were not for my father I should revenge myself on Jacob who has taken my birthright, and stolen my blessing! But respect for my father restrains me, I shall wait till after his death, and then *when he is in the tomb, I will kill my brother Jacob.*[1] Ephestian and Cratires, the two greatest favorites of Alexander, nourished a secret jealousy and hatred against one another because they saw that this prince divided his friendship between them, yet they gave no signs of this, except a mutual coldness of manner; when one day, during the voyage to the Indies, thrown off their guard, they spoke injuriously to one another, and from words they came to blows and would have fought, sword in hand, had not their friends separated them. Alexander himself gave them a severe reprimand, reconciled them, and made them swear friendship, adding that, though they were the two persons in the world he loved most, he would put them both to death if they ever quarrelled again: this produced so great an effect on their minds, that afterwards they lived peaceably together, and never by word or act offended each other again. If respect and love for a man had power to subdue these angry spirits, and to unite wills so divided, ought not the love of Our Lord operate in us still greater effects? Pardon, then, the injuries done you, for the sake of the

[1] Gen. 27, 41.

love and affection you bear Him ; to fulfil the commandment that obliges you to do so, to obey the law you have embraced, the law of love which banishes from the heart all animosities, replenishes it with a holy affection for every one, and by an effect peculiar to it, for enemies ; recall to mind the great treasures of grace and merit which will follow ; in fine, accord this pardon through fear of losing your own soul, remembering this terrible menace : With the same measure you mete to others, *it shall be measured out to you.* You yourself should wish to accord this ; you have made a contract with God that you will do so ; you daily ratify it, when you say : *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.* Think well of what you say, and to what this bargain obliges you : you consent that God should not forget the offences you commit against Him, if you cherish the remembrance of those you have received ; you close His Heart to yourself if you close your heart to your neighbor. *If you will not forgive from your heart your brothers,* when they offend you, *neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you your sins ;* but He will deliver you to the executioners of His Justice till you shall have paid all. He who is not aroused by the voice of such thunder, says St. Austin, shows that he is not merely asleep, but dead. If your enemy is of the number of the predestinate you must be sorry for having hated a man destined to become so great and happy, with whom you will live eternally in perfect peace and friendship in the abode of bliss, otherwise you must resolve to deprive yourself of all this felicity ; if your enemy should hereafter be condemned to eternal flames, he will suffer quite enough in hell without your inflicting punishment on him here below.

III. Let us follow this spirit of grace and love ; let us accomplish the holy duties of our religion ; let us do, through the motive of pleasing Our Lord, all that He asks of us and commands us ; let us love our enemies, do good to

them that hate us ; let us not render evil for evil, outrage for outrage, but, contrariwise, blessings, knowing that it is to this we have been called, to receive the inheritance of the benediction of God.[1] Let us pray for those who persecute and calumniate us, after the example of Our Lord and in union with Him. It is an excellent practice to pray daily for those who annoy us by their dispositions, their sentiments, their affections, especially when we feel within us some motions of anger or aversion. O if it is good to fast or give alms, how much more agreeable must it be to God to make Him this sacrifice of charity! As regards words we must be very circumspect when we speak of those who have done us some injury, for in this case the tongue is a slippery member and may easily cause us to fall : hence we must speak with great caution, and even it would be better for the greater number not to speak at all, of them, nor permit them to be spoken of, lest to flatter our passions and justify our sentiments others may speak ill of them in our presence.

IV. We will conclude by the beautiful remarks of St. Austin, on the vengeance which the just, in the Holy Scripture, desired and asked of God for the injuries they received. David and Jeremiah asked vengeance ; the martyrs under the altars where their holy bodies repose, say to God, as St. John testifies : How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on earth ?[2] and who have unjustly shed it ? where then is the love of enemies, and the pardon of injuries which is commanded us? The holy Doctor tells us. The good and the wicked desire the chastisement of their enemies and ask it of God, but with this difference that the just desires the amendment of his enemy rather than his punishment ; and when he sees the hand of God stretched out to chastise him he takes no pleasure in his

[1] Peter iii. 9. [2] Apoc. vi. 10.

suffering, because he does not hate him, but in the beauty of the divine justice, for he loves God. If the chastisement makes the culprit enter into himself and return to his duty, the just rejoices, if he remains obstinate in his sin the just rejoices in his punishment, for sake of the other men who learn wisdom at the expense of this hardened heart. The just himself profits of it not to nourish his hatred by the affliction of another, but to correct his own faults : so the joy the just man experiences when he sees vengeance, and washes his hands, that is, renders his works more pure, in the blood of sinners, comes not from malice but from benevolence, because he rejoices not in the evil of others, but he uses their examples to increase his own fear of God. As regards the vengeance God inflicts on the reprobate in the other life, it pleases him because it pleases God. The wicked man, on the contrary, feels pain if his enemy escapes punishment by changing his life ; if he sees him punished he rejoices, and derives pleasure from the misfortune of a man he hates, and not from the satisfaction made to the justice of God, whom he does not love. When he remits his interests into the hands of God that He may deal justice to his enemy, he does so not by a spirit of charity, but through a still greater hatred ; because he knows that the arm of God is heavier than his arm, he wishes him to be overwhelmed with the strokes of the divine vengeance, and that he should be made to suffer torments more dreadful than any he himself could inflict.

SECTION V.

HOW WE OUGHT TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR AND TO WHAT DEGREE.

I. We ought to love Him in effect.—II. As ourselves.—III. As Our Lord has loved loved us.

I. The first manner of loving our neighbor is to love him as the beloved disciple teaches us, when he says : My

little children, let us love not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in *truth*;[1] let us testify our affection not with the tongue, but by good effects: nothing consists less in words than true love; it says, like Rachel, *give me children lest I die.*[2] As regards the measure of this love Our Lord gives us two rules.

II. The first is contained in these words: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.[3] What is the meaning of these words: *As yourself, as you love yourself?* They mean, as St. Thomas explains, that the love you bear your neighbor should resemble the love you bear yourself: 1. As regards the end: you shall love your neighbor for God as you love yourself for God, that your love may be holy. 2. As regards the rule of love: you must seek to oblige your neighbor only in what is good, since on no account should you bend your will and affections to what is bad; love must ever be united to justice. 3. As regards the manner of loving: you should love your neighbor not for your own interest or pleasure but for his good, that your love may be true, as you love yourself not for your neighbor's sake but for your own; otherwise it would not be love for your neighbor, but love for yourself in your neighbor. St. Austin, explaining this text, after having declared that he alone loves himself truly who loves his God, because in loving God he prepares for himself sovereign felicity, adds: You must then do for your neighbor what you do for yourself, that is to say, strive to excite him to love God with a perfect love; for if you love him as you ought, you will try to procure for him the good towards which you tend. Hence we see, according to the holy Doctor, the love of the neighbor ought to have God for its object, and the desire to procure him eternal goods; for he who wishes to his neighbor health, honors and temporal goods, without reference to his salvation, does not love him

[1] St. John 1, Epis. iii. 18. [2] Gen. xxx. 1. [3] Matth. xxii. 39.

with Christian charity, which is pleasing to God, and which is commanded us, but with a natural and human love ; we may conclude hence that there are but few true Christians, since there are but few who love their neighbor with this pure love and for eternity, and who have not in view their own interest or natural considerations : yet this pure love is the mark of true Christianity. So that we may say what Socrates said, speaking of disinterested friendship : O my dear friends, there are few true friends, few persons who love each other with a Christian and loyal friendship !

But I establish this truth on another reason : we ought to regard as fundamental, in discerning between true and false friendship this famous maxim of Aristotle, St. Jerome and St. Austin : "a friendship which can end never existed." Whence we must conclude that to be true and to merit justly this honorable title, friendship ought necessarily tend to eternity, without placing any limit to its duration, and consequently to Paradise, since it is only then that it can be eternal ; for if two persons who love each other should come to be damned, their friendship would change into deadly hatred, because in hell there is no love. A happiness so sweet as love is not made for the lost ; they will be always convulsed with rage and hatred against one another ; they will even hate with a violence proportioned to the love that once inflamed them, since this love has been the cause of their misfortune. If one of two persons who loved each other is not damned, and the other is, their friendship is not the less broken, and can never be renewed, because the happy soul cannot love the soul which is in hell, and which God hates, which has nothing in it that merits love, but has, on the contrary, everything that merits hatred. No more can the damned soul love that which is saved, not that it is not amiable, but because its corrupt heart is incapable of so great and laudable a thing as friendship, and because hating God, it cannot love what

God cherishes. Those then who profess to love each other must love each other for Heaven, for a blessed eternity ; they must naturally aid each other to attain to this, because it is only by this means that they can render eternal their affection commenced in this valley of tears ; and it is in Heaven that the fire which burns in their heart can preserve its flame.

Moreover, to comprehend the words of Jesus Christ which we have cited, we must recall those which Our Divine Saviour said in another place and of which the Emperor Alexander Severus made such great account, that though he was a pagan he had them often in his mouth, caused them to be proclaimed by his heralds and engraven on the façades of public buildings : *Do unto others as you wish others should do unto you ;* render them all the services you desire to receive at their hands ; this is a rule of justice which the bare light of the natural law suffices to teach us. Therefore, as you wish to be assisted in your necessities, consoled in your afflictions, sustained in your weakness ; that no one should judge or speak ill of you or do you any other wrong, have these sentiments for your neighbor and act on them towards him. In this consists the love you owe him, as St. Prosper observes.

III. The second rule Our Lord gives on this subject is more extensive than the first ; it is contained in these words : I give you a new commandment, that you love one another *as I have loved you.* O what love ! What charity ! What a rule ! And how has Our Lord loved us ? He has loved us the first, making the most amiable advances ; He loved us though we were not in any manner worthy of His love and could render Him no service ; we were even infinitely unworthy of it, being culpable of many offences towards Him ; He loved us in becoming man for us, in laboring unremittingly in our service for thirty-three years, in suffering the most dreadful torments, in shedding all

His Blood and in dying on a gibbet ; He loved us in giving Himself to us with all His goods ; He loved us for a very holy and disinterested end, not for Himself ; He had no need of us for his happiness, but He wished to make us happy, and this for the glory of His Father. Behold true love!

IV. St. Austin tells us that Our Lord became man to teach us how we ought to love one another in the law of love, and the extent of this love. Our Lord came on earth chiefly to make known to man how much God loves Him, and by this knowledge to inflame man with love for Him who has prevented him with so much goodness, to oblige him to it by a precept, and to teach him by example how he ought to love his neighbor. If we follow this example, how perfect will not our fraternal charity be! What will we not do and suffer for our neighbor? Seneca was able to say : When I take a friend, what think you is my design? It is to have a man for whom I would die, whom I would follow into exile, whom I would defend and for whom I would sacrifice myself. If we were filled with the spirit of Jesus Christ, if our hearts were inflamed with this divine fire, should not we do still more? Yes, without doubt. St. Paul, this perfect imitator of Jesus Christ, this most accomplished model of Christian charity, desired to lose for the Jews who persecuted him, not only goods, honor and temporal life, but even eternal life ; to be forever deprived of beatitude, and to suffer the torments of hell, provided he could do all this without committing sin. Behold the extent of fraternal charity among Christians, behold how far the flame of this divine fire rises, behold the degree of love attained not only by St. Paul, but by several others, as Moses, St. Austin, St. Catherine of Genoa. The same Apostle says to the Philippians : God is my witness how I long after you in the bowels of Jesus Christ, that is to say, how I love you with the same bowels, the

same charity, in my measure, with which Jesus Christ loves you; and by the force of the love with which my heart burns for you, I desire ardently to make you enter His Heart that you may dwell there, and share in the abundance of His most tender mercies. It is thus we ought to love each other in the bowels of Jesus Christ, with the same sentiments as He has for us, as if we were all in His Heart, and that in it, animated with His Divine Spirit, and inflamed with His love, we exercised charity towards one another.

I know that, considering the corruption of our nature which has no stronger passion than self-love, such charity is very difficult, but it cannot be doubted that Our Lord who asks and commands it, will give us all the succors necessary to practice it, if we wish to render ourselves worthy of receiving them, and if we on our part contribute with all our strength. The best means to facilitate the practice of this virtue is to consider God and Our Lord in our neighbor, since they are effectually in him, as we have said elsewhere. In this view we must give to our neighbor every mark of sincere love, thinking that it is not properly to man but to God and Our Lord that we evince this good-will; not to the creature but to the Creator; not to the image but to the prototype; not to the servant but to the master; not to the member but to the head, who says to us: "As often as you did it to the least of My brethren, you did it to Me." It is certain that we owe to Our Lord our bodies, our souls, all that we are, all that we have, in virtue of the rights He has over us as Creator and Redeemer; we ought then to love, honor and serve Him: and if it were possible that we could see Him in any necessity, we should be bound to aid Him and consume ourselves in His service; well, He has ceded His rights to men and has associated them in the participation of all that was due to Him, by making them His co-heirs. We are then

obliged in virtue of this cession to render them in some manner the duties we should be obliged to render Him. St. John, speaking of the rights of the neighbor founded on the rights of Our Lord, after having said, *in this have we known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us,* adds: *and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* Hence St. Paul feared not to speak thus of himself to the faithful of Corinth: *As to what depends on me I would willingly give all* that I have *and even myself* for the salvation of your souls. He who desires to fulfill constantly and joyfully the holy duties of charity, ought to raise his mind to these considerations, and habitually fix his thoughts on them.

SECTION VI.

DUTIES OF CHARITY.

OF ENVY.

I. Extent of the duties of charity.—II. Definition of envy.—III. This sin directly combats charity.—IV. Resolutions.

I. Though one might gather from what has been said what the duties of charity are, yet it is fitting to enter into some detail. Fraternal charity ought to reign in our will, in our understanding, in our mouth and in our works. In the will it should annihilate all movements of envy, in the understanding it ought to stifle all thoughts injurious to the neighbor and all rash judgments; in our mouth it ought to retrench all angry, unkind words, all mockeries and slanders; in our actions it ought to avoid all that is bad or unjust, and exercise us in works of charity.

II. Envy is a vice by which we experience pain because of the good that may happen to our neighbor, considering it as a diminution of our good. To elucidate this definition, we will distinguish, with St. Thomas, four ways of

feeling pain at the good of our neighbor. First, when we fear that the good of the neighbor will be a source of misfortune to others or to ourselves ; this pain is not envy, and may be felt without sin. It often happens, says St. Gregory, that we rejoice at the misfortune of our enemy without wounding charity, and without any movement of envy ; his prosperity afflicts us when we see, for example, that his fall would be an occasion of drawing many from misery, while his prosperity is established only by the ruin of those whom he unjustly despoils. Second, when we are afflicted at the good of our neighbor, not because he possesses it, but because we having need of it are deprived of it, this is not envy : Aristotle calls it zeal, emulation. When this affliction is experienced with reference to spiritual and eternal goods, it is laudable and virtuous ; when it is felt with reference to temporal goods it is good or bad according to the intention and moderation with which it is felt. Third, when we grieve to see good happen to a man whom we judge unworthy of it. As these events being arranged by a wise disposition of Providence who governs all here below, who distributes riches and poverty, glory and infamy for very wise ends ; this sadness is forbidden us by the Scripture, and the Royal Prophet says to us : Be not moved by the prosperity of the wicked, envy not those who commit iniquity ; let the secret designs of Divine Providence have full scope. We may add that when we are afflicted at the increase of a person's riches or dignities, because knowing his weakness we fear that he will abuse these blessings, that they will be for him stumbling blocks, this sadness is not a vice but a virtue and an effect of charity. The fourth manner is to be afflicted at the good of our neighbor because it hinders or diminishes our own ; this sadness is properly the vice of envy.

III. This sin is diametrically opposed to charity which

excites us to will and procure good to our neighbor, and to rejoice in his prosperity; while this accursed vice inclines us not only to do no good to our neighbor but to be grieved and displeased at the good which happens to him. Cost what it will, this passion must be exterminated, we must root its smallest fibres out of our hearts, great and strong reasons oblige us to eradicate it. Envy, as St. Basil and other Fathers teach, is the vice proper to the demon who in Heaven envied the glory reserved to the human nature by its hypostatic union with the Divine Word, and who on earth envied Adam and his posterity the eternal beatitude prepared for them, and which led this infernal spirit to solicit man to sin, to make him lose this beatitude, and envelop him in his own misfortune. By the envy of the devil, says the Sage, death entered into the world, and all the envious are his imitators and disciples.[1] It excited Cain to kill Abel, says St. Austin, the sons of Jacob to sell their brother Joseph, the Babylonians to expose Daniel to the hungry lions, and the Jews to crucify Our Lord. What rage! What fury! The patriarch Jacob speaking of the ill-will his children evinced towards their brother Joseph, says: They that held darts envied him. St. Jerome remarks on this text, that the Holy Ghost represents envy armed with darts to pierce those on whom it casts its hideous eye. But if envy causes so many evils to the objects of it, it causes many more to the envious person himself: first, it kills his soul by depriving it of grace, for it is of its own nature a mortal sin, though in its lesser degrees, it may be only venial; it fills the soul with sadness and weariness, and withers up the heart. The envious, says St. Basil, tastes no joy, sadness never abandons him, it is his element; as rust consumes the iron which produced it, as the worm gnaws the wood which engendered it, as the viper tears the entrails of its

[1] Sap. ii. 24.

mother, so envy gnaws the heart of the envious, dries his bones and devours his whole substance. Hence St. Gregory Nazianzen, well says that envy is the most unjust sin and the most just: the most unjust because it is the enemy of all good, the most just because even in this world it puts hell in the heart of him who commits it. Evagoras said with much reason that the envious was the most miserable of all men, the most unfortunate of all sinners; for other sinners are tormented only by their own sins, but the envious is tormented by the good of others. Strange disorder! What ought to rejoice him afflicts him; as bright colors dazzle weak eyes, as our day is night in another hemisphere, the happiness of our neighbor becomes our misfortune. Vile and abject vice, which can dwell only in base souls!

Envy, says Ovid, is a base vice which cannot raise itself to anything good.[1] St. Gregory and St. Thomas make a similar remark on these words of Job: *Envy kills the weak*, who thinks he has lost much because others surpass him in advantages. But what does his envy profit him? Does it rob others of the good they possess or augment his own good qualities? Quite the contrary; it robs himself of whatever good he possesses since it deprives him of grace, and hinders him from participating in the good of his neighbor, which would certainly happen, if, instead of giving way to envy, he rejoiced in his neighbor's prosperity; because charity makes us share in all the goods of Christians, who are our brothers.

IV. Convinced by these reasons let us fly this detestable and diabolical vice so contrary to charity which, as St. Paul says, *envieth not*, but which, as St. Gregory explains, makes us feel the evils of others as our own, share their joys, look on their losses as our own, and hail as blessings to ourselves all the good that happens them. St. Austin

[1] Ovid 5, de Ponto.

gives the reason of this. Charity, says he, ruins the empire of covetousness by sapping the two foundations on which it is established, namely, *mine* and *thine*, because it sees only God, and the neighbor in God, and in all that refers to His glory. But nothing is more proper to make an impression on us than the comparison St. Paul uses: All the members of the body are mutually careful one for another. And if one suffers anything, all the members suffer with it, or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it;[1] the least noble member is not jealous of that which is created for the most noble functions; on the contrary, it aids it, and contributes all it can to enable it to perform worthily its charge. The finger, says St. Austin, is one of the least members of the human body, the eye is one of its most magnificent parts; yet a sound finger is better than a diseased eye: let the Christian seek in the mystic body of which he is a member, not to be among the noblest and most elevated in rank, but in health, which is no other thing than charity.[2]

When, then, the prosperity of our neighbor excites in us any movement of envy, let us immediately combat it with the arms of charity, and let us stifle it in its birth. Far from feeling sad at my brother's happiness I will rejoice in it, I will desire its increase, and I will beg of God to grant him every blessing I ask for myself. Now is my joy complete, He must increase and I must decrease,[3] said St. John Baptist to his disciples who sought to excite in him some motions of jealousy by telling him that all men were coming to Jesus, having quitted him. O how happy am I that my neighbor possesses this good! He must increase, and I must decrease; he must be elevated and I abased, because He merits it more than I. We must then consider in the neighbor, Jesus Christ Our Lord, who is glorified by the advantages we procure him. Scipio Afri-

[1] Cor. xii. 55. [2] In Psalm cxxx. [3] John iii. 29.

canus, to induce the Senate to name his brother general of the army destined to fight in Asia, said that he would give his life, his counsels and all the services he had ever done the Republic, that he would even enlist as a common soldier to procure him this honor. These words decided the choice of the Senate. Scipio accompanied his brother in this war, helped him to gain the victory and led him back to Rome, charged with laurels. Let the Christian learn from this pagan not to envy the glory of his neighbor, who is his brother, but to procure glory for him by his own abasement, which will then become truly honorable to him and which will be to him as steps by which to reach eternal glory.

SECTION VII.

OF RASH JUDGMENTS.

I. Different degrees of rash judgments.—II. We ought never to judge.—III. Our judgments are always uncertain.

I. After having purified our will of all sentiments of envy, we must root out of our understanding all rash judgments and bad thoughts against our neighbor. Nothing is more common among men than rash judgments. We will notice, with theologians, three degrees of this vice: doubt, suspicion and judgment. One is in doubt when in weighing the reasons for and against, one suspends the judgment, not leaning to one side or the other. There is suspicion when one inclines to believe the worse, without being altogether certain that it is the true side of the question; finally one judges when he acknowledges the thing as absolutely certain. There is sin in each degree where there are no reasonable motives for forming these opinions; but the sin is less in the first degree than in the second, in the second than in the third; because we ought to

reckon among the goods a man possesses, and even to prefer to riches, the good esteem each is obliged to have for his neighbors, till this obligation be removed by some just cause, and we are thus free to adopt different opinions. He who without a just motive thinks ill of his neighbor, wrongs him, because he robs him of a good which is due to him, that is, the good opinion he is bound to have of him, inasmuch as, according to the common principles received by all, in doubtful things the most favorable interpretation is to be received, and inasmuch as a man ought to be regarded innocent till he is proved guilty.

II. Though strictly speaking one may form not only doubts and suspicions against the neighbor, bnt even a fixed judgment, and say that he has done evil, when there is sufficient proof, because then it is not a rash but a well-founded judgment ; yet as all the principles of our judgments are uncertain, because they are grounded only on the moving sands of conjectures which, even with the appearance of truth, are often deceitful—the surest way is never to judge ill of any one, but to have always a good opinion of all, especially if we are not obliged by the duty of our charge to watch over the actions of others and examine them, because by this means we shall prevent a thousand troubles, and empty our minds of many vain and hurtful thoughts, and be better able to apply them to useful and advantageous things.

We cannot judge correctly of the very objects that strike our eyes. Seen at a distance they often appear otherwise than they in reality are ; a stick half ingulphed in water appears bent : it is very difficult to form a just judgment on the actions of men, because they depend on many circumstances liable to change their nature, and because the goodness or malice of an action flows from a source which is unknown to us : I mean from the disposition of the heart. When Anna, mother of Samuel, prayed in the tem-

ple in great bitterness of heart, the High Priest Heli judged by her exterior movements that she was inebriated, yet she was ravished with extraordinary devotion and fervor. The friends of Job seeing him fall from great prosperity to extreme misery, and perceiving in him no exterior sin, judged that he was guilty of some great secret crime which had drawn on him all these misfortunes, and yet he was a very just and holy man to whom God had sent these afflictions, not in punishment of his crimes, but to exercise his patience, and crown him with glory hereafter. When St. Paul entered the city of Damascus, who would not have said with Ananias that he came to persecute the faithful, to lead them in chains to Jerusalem and to destroy the Name of Jesus Christ? And yet he came to preach this sacred Name, to establish the Christian faith and to confound the Jews. When St. Boniface, so disgraced by his past life, secretly withdrew from his companions in the city of Tarsus, who would not have thought that he went to commit some new crime, and yet at that very time he was suffering cruel torments, and giving his life for the faith through love of Our Lord. St. Leontius, Bishop of Cyprus, relates the following memorable fact of the Abbot Vitalius. This holy man at the age of sixty quitted his monastery and went to Alexandria during the episcopate of St. John the Almoner, and by a particular movement of the Holy Ghost and a charity more admirable than imitable, used to go every night into some disreputable house, and give a piece of money to one of its scandalous inmates, on condition that she would refrain from sin that night; while she slept, the Abbot remained in a corner of her chamber praising God and praying for her. In the morning he retired, having made her promise that she would not discover the motive which brought him to her house. The whole city was scandalized to see a person of his age

and dignity frequent these infamous places ; yet he continued to go. Some time after, he died, and all the people struck by a miracle wrought at his death, ran to his little hut, found him on his knees, as if in prayer, and saw these words engraven on the pavement : "People of Alexandria, judge not before the time, but expect the Lord who will judge all men."

If proofs which appeared so clear and evident were still false ; if conjectures which seemed so well-founded were deceitful ; have we not great reason to doubt all those which appear to our neighbor's disadvantage, and which might make us adopt false and erroneous opinions, like these meteors which sometimes cause travellers to wander in the night, and conduct them to a precipice ? Do we not daily see that on appearances seemingly plausible, persons are believed culpable of evils they never thought of ? The Apostle gives us in his Epistle to the Romans some reasons for abstaining from judging our neighbor. And first, your neighbor is responsible for his conduct, to God and not to you : Who are you to dare to condemn the servant of another ? To his own lord he standeth or falleth ;[1] he has his Lord and his Judge—to whom he must render an account of what he does—his Master, to absolve or condemn him. The Apostle gives us a second reason which includes a principle, as much for conversation as for things in themselves when they are neither good nor bad : Let every man abound in his own sense ; let him do and say what he pleases with regard to things indifferent ; you think your neighbor is deceived on such a point ; this is your opinion and not his : you judge according to your humor ; the thing may be done or omitted, since it is indifferent. Does not daily experience prove that the same meat tastes differently in the mouth of a bilious man, and in that of a phlegmatic man, because of the different

[1] Romans xiv.

humors that predominate in them? Well, we ought to believe also that in the judgments we make on things which have no determinate malice or goodness, we follow the dispositions we find in our own minds: hence let us leave to each the liberty to follow his own opinion, without wishing to constrain all to follow ours. The Apostle gives us a third reason stronger than the preceding, which is that we usurp the power God has reserved to Himself. But then, why judgest thou thy brother? or why dost thou despise thy brother? he is your brother and consequently your like; you mix yourself up with a thing that does not belong to you. Do you not know that Our Lord is the Judge, that we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ to receive from His mouth our definitive sentence? Why do we arrogate to ourselves the authority of judging? asks St. Doretheus; it belongs only to God. Has He ordered us to pronounce sentence against His own creatures? What happened to the Abbot Isaac ought at the same time astonish and instruct us. This holy man having one day, in presence of several, condemned a Religious who had committed a fault, when he returned to his cell saw an angel at the door who said to him: The Religious whom you so unfeelingly condemned is dead; God directed me to learn of you where he ought to be sent, whether you wish me to bear his soul to paradise or to hell. The holy man, extremely terrified at these dreadful words, immediately cast himself on his knees and besought God to pardon his sin. Arise, said the angel, God has pardoned you, but in future beware of judging any one before the judgment of Our Lord. The Saint arose; but the remembrance of this sin remained so profoundly engraven on his heart, that though he heard from the mouth of an angel that he was forgiven, he ceased not to do penance all the rest of his life, and to shed a great abundance of tears.

III. We ought not to exceed our authority; the Holy Church, though enlightened by the Holy Ghost, does not give herself liberty to judge of what is done in the heart, because her lights do not reach thus far, and because God above can discover what passes there. And shall an ignorant, vicious, rude, passionate man presume to arrogate to himself the right of judging and of passing sentence on what goes on there? What pride! When we hear a man swear, blaspheme, outrage his neighbor, we can and we ought to say that this exterior action is bad, but for the interior, who can say it? Who can judge that this action is truly and essentially bad? Have we seen the heart in which this action takes its source?—do we know the intention of Him who has done it? And yet from the intention alone proceeds the goodness or malice of our works. This man may have been impelled by a purely natural impetuosity; a first movement can so trouble the mind that it has no knowledge whatever of the evil it does. Let us not then judge the actions of our neighbor, we have no charge of him; let each watch over his own faults and mind his own business and he will have quite enough to do. The holy Abbot Moses, a very celebrated Religious, having been called to assist at the trial of a monk who had committed some fault, refused many times, but finally went carrying on his back a sack of gravel. When asked why he came thus equipped, he answered: "These are my sins which I carry behind me, and which I do not see, and you wish me to examine and judge the sins of others." This response caused the culprit to be treated more leniently. Speaking of these judgments, Our Lord said that we see a mote in our brother's eyes but cannot see a beam in our own eyes; let us first take the beam that blinds us, out of our own eye, and then we shall see clearly to remove the mote which only impedes a little the actions of his eye. This same Lord warns us thus: Judge not and you shall

not be judged, condemn not and you shall not be condemned.

Besides, when you judge or condemn any one, whom do you judge and condemn? It is not perhaps a man who is better than yourself. The Pharisee, inflated with self-esteem, charged many faults upon the poor Publican, who was better in the sight of God than himself. St. Thomas well remarks, that it is ordinarily the most vicious who are most inclined to suspect and judge evil, because they are persuaded that others are like themselves, according to this saying of Solomon: Yea, and the fool when he walketh in the way whereas he himself is a fool, he esteemeth all men fools. But it is particularly those who are subject to hatred that condemn most easily; for it is very easy when one hates any one, to suppose great faults from light conjectures, because we easily believe what we desire.

But suppose that he whom you judge is worse than you, that he is guilty of the fault for which you condemn him, "do you know," as St. Dorotheus wisely asks, "how much he has resisted before committing it? how many combats he sustained before he surrendered? how many victories he gained over the demon before he was vanquished? Since the fault has been committed, do you know the sorrow he has conceived for it? the humility with which he begged pardon for it, the tears which he shed to efface it? You look at his sin and you ignore his penance. The Pharisee denounced Magdalen as a sinner when the lively contrition she felt and the burning tears she shed had obtained pardon of her sins and rendered her soul whiter than snow."

Let us go farther, and suppose the delinquent surrendered at the first attack, that he has not repented of his fault; well, who has assured you that he will remain always in this state? Has not God mercy and power enough to work his conversion? If he is a sinner to-day,

may he not be a Saint to-morrow? If he is wicked now, may he not one day be just? It is easy for God, says the Sage, to enrich the poor man, that is, to justify the sinner, to shower graces upon him and render him truly holy, however poor and vicious he is. When Saul guarded the clothes of those who stoned St. Stephen, and stoned him by the hands of all, as St Austin observes, breathing only blood and fierce vengeance, and bent on slaughtering the infant Church in its cradle, who could imagine that in a little time he would become the Apostle of the Gentiles, the most powerful defender God gave to His Church? On the contrary who would think in seeing Judas chosen an Apostle by Jesus Christ Himself, to attain great virtue, to work miracles, that he would betray his master and become the most wicked man on whom the sun ever shone? When you see any one commit a fault, say to yourself: Perhaps he will be greater than I in Heaven, if indeed God gives me grace to go there. Besides, if this man sins now, who has told you that you should not sin yourself very soon? He falls to-day and you are standing, perhaps to-morrow he may rise up and you fall. This was the sentiment of a holy Religious of whom St. Bernard speaks, who in seeing a brother commit a fault, said with a sigh: Alas! what he has done to-day I shall do to-morrow, if God do not assist me.

Finally, to cut off suspicions, we ought to remember that *charity thinketh no evil*, as St. Paul says; it puts a good construction on everything, it interprets all in the best sense, it has the eyes of the dove, pure, simple and innocent. A holy Franciscan named Leo, saw one day the eyes of Blessed Bernard of Quintavalle, first companion of the holy Patriarch St. Francis, which shone like two brilliant stars; at the same time two brilliant rays issued from them: the holy Religious knew by this that the eyes of Bernard were thus luminous because he had never judged ill of his neighbor, and had never seen a man of

any condition whatever without believing him better than himself. These are the eyes charity gives the soul. Charity can have only eyes of love and benevolence : let us then use these eyes to see our neighbor, to judge his actions ; let us accustom ourselves always to have a high esteem for him, often considering the eminent qualities which ennoble him ; let us think that he is the noblest of creatures, the chef-d'œuvre of God—His living image whom He loves with an infinite love, whom He has ransomed by the Blood of Jesus Christ ; let us separate from him all that could vilify him in our eyes : and though the man be subject to sins and weakness, we ought to esteem him, not because of his defects but because of his excellence, which ought to have more power over our mind. A little prince, eldest son of the king, is respected though he be but a child, and weak and sickly ; because of his high birth, because he is destined one day to bear the crown and sceptre. We must act in a similar manner towards the Christian, though filled with imperfections which belong to his nature and even to his will, because he has been regenerated in the waters of Baptism, by which he became a child of God, brother of Our Lord and heir of an eternal kingdom, worthy of great honor not only in the eyes of those who love him, but in the eyes of an equitable Judge ; we must then hold of him an opinion worthy of his excellence, and address him in words full of charity and respect. But the words addressed to the neighbor deserve a special section.

SECTION VIII.

OF WORDS HURTFUL TO CHARITY.

I. Slander.—II. How committed.—III. We must speak well of the neighbor and excuse him.—IV. Of sharp words.—V. Of quarrels.

I. *Life and death are in the power of the tongue,*[1] says

[1] Prov. viii. 21.

the Sage ; the tongue is capable of doing great good or great evil ; but, above all, it can serve or injure charity to an immense extent : it needs only a good word to preserve it, a bad word to destroy it. Among bad words is distinguished calumny, which consists in speaking ill of a neighbor, making known his faults, discovering his defects, to wound his reputation and destroy his honor. This vice is unfortunately too common among men ; it is a pestilence spread nearly everywhere. A great number are guilty of the vice of slander, says St. Jerome, very few are entirely free from it ; its poison acts so powerfully on the human mind, that many who avoid other vices fall into this as the last snare the devils spread for them.

II. According to St. Thomas, slander is committed directly or indirectly. It may be committed directly in four manners : in accusing a neighbor of a fault he is not guilty of ; in amplyfying and exaggerating a fault committed ; in discovering it if it be secret ; in interpreting his actions in a bad sense, and attributing to them a bad intention. One may also commit slander indirectly in four ways : by expressing doubt of, or denying, the perfections attributed to the neighbor, or the good works he gets credit for ; in diminishing them or seeking to lessen their value ; in not speaking in his praise in times and places in which silence passes for censure ; or to praise him by halves, using words which appear forced. Such praises are malign and cruel, and serve only to make the calumny pass more freely ; they are like those darts whose points the archer oils that they may be more penetrating : His words are sweeter than oil, and the same are darts,[1] says David.

Besides detraction and calumny, all rude, sharp, contentious, sarcastic and bitter words ought to be regarded as opposed to charity ; as ought also railleries, criticisms on the natural or moral defects of our brother, and in gen-

[1] Ps. liv. 22.

eral all that can unjustly cause some displeasure to our neighbor, and he who wishes to practice charity and show himself a true Christian should absolutely refrain from these things.

III. Instead of speaking ill of our neighbor we should always speak well of him, unless charity itself will not permit us to do so; we must show our esteem by our words, and excuse his faults as much as possible. "Thy lips are a scarlet lace, and Thy word is sweet," says the Spouse in the Canticles, speaking of His Beloved. What is this scarlet lace? asks Theodoret. It is, says he, the charity which governs the words of the Beloved, who, for love of her Spouse, loves her neighbor and always speaks well of him. If we had a true love for our neighbor, we should never say anything injurious to him, because the effect of love is to procure good to the person loved and to avoid all that can pain her: we should dissemble his defects, says St. Dorotheus, we should hide them as far as possible, or if it be necessary to allude to them we should seek to excuse them by words full of sweetness and indulgence, according to this saying of St. Peter: Charity covereth a multitude of sins.[1] How did Our Lord act on the Cross? What words did He pronounce in speaking of the sin His enemies committed in putting Him to death? *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* The sin was enormous, it was the greatest ever committed; yet he lessens its enormity and excuses them on plea of their ignorance. He could not excuse the hatred of the Priests, the envy of the Scribes and Pharisees, the ingratitude of the people, the falsehood of the witnesses, the injustice of Pilate, the cruelty of the soldiers: these faults were too evident to admit of concealment; there remained to charity only the single excuse which want of the knowledge of the dignity of His person implied; for if they knew He was just, they

[1] Peter iv. 8.

were ignorant that He was the Saint of Saints, the Lord of Glory ; otherwise they had never conspired, as St. Paul observes, and had been innocent of so horrible an offence against so sublime a Majesty. Well, Jesus Christ gives this excuse to His Father ; He uses it to excite His pity, to obtain their pardon, and to shield them from the chastisements which they deserved.

If Our Lord found excuse for the greatest criminals, and for the blackest and most abominable crimes, it will be easy for us, if we please, to find excuses for the faults of our neighbor, who is far from the malice of the Jews. For this it suffices that it be charity which sees the faults, and that it directs the words. If you perceive that your neighbor has committed some fault, says St. Bernard, do not give your mind the liberty of accusing and condemning him, but rather excuse him ; if you cannot excuse the action excuse the intention ; say that it proceeds from imprudence, surprise, chance. If the proofs are so clear and evident that you cannot excuse or hide the sin, consider the violence of the temptations as an extenuating circumstance, and say : How terrible must the temptation be which has so cruelly overthrown him ! What would become of me if I experienced a similar one ! It is thus we ought always seek some reason to diminish the faults of our neighbor, and be ever eager to hide his defects as much as possible. The holy Religious Constabilis, who was afterwards Abbot, practiced this in so eminent a degree that he deserved the honor of being called the covering of his brethren, because he excused them and employed all lawful means of concealing their faults. Charity covers sin ; it has always before its eyes a great purple veil to throw over the sins and defects of the neighbor. The great and pious Constantine, first Christian Emperor, after having burned at the Council of Nice the accusations which some ecclesiastics gave him against one another, without saying

a single word on their dissensions, made this memorable remark : "If I should see with my own eyes a Priest or Religious commit sin, I would cover him with my imperial purple, in order that no one else should observe it."

But as we may and even ought sometimes to speak of the defects of others, we should in these conjunctures use great moderation and wisdom, observing well the times and place, and the person to whom we ought to speak of them, and hiding them from all others, following always a spirit of charity which will cover all defects unless those which for a good reason it may be necessary to discover. To render us very circumspect on a point of such importance, I will give here a remark St. Austin made on a passage of St. John : When Our Lord was about to declare to His Apostles that Judas would betray Him, *He was troubled in spirit*, because, says the holy Doctor, He saw Himself forced to make known the traitor, in order to distinguish him from the others.

IV. As to sharp, rude and contemptuous words, charity entirely prohibits them, and puts into the mouth only sweet, affable and respectful words, which evince to the neighbor the esteem in which it holds him ; because charity opens the eyes to consider the neighbor in the relation in which he stands to God, which renders him truly honorable. Our Lord addresses the words *My son* to those who came to be healed, though they were of low condition. He calls the Apostles His brothers, even after the Resurrection, and in the splendor of His glory. When He announced His design of resuscitating Lazarus, He said : Lazarus our *friend* sleepeth ; not content to call him by his name, He adds this honorable title of friend. What sweetness ! St. Paul placed among the fruits of charity peace, meekness, modesty, to show us that charity gives a pacific spirit, renders a man gentle and modest in his words and actions, makes him honor every one and despise

no one. The Sage had already taught that the Holy Ghost, who is love by essence, is a Spirit of concord inclining him whom He animates to use becoming and respectful words, rendering him meek and humane, and causing him to watch continually over his words and actions that he may offend no one. But we shall enlarge on this point in treating of conversation.

V. Charity excludes all quarrels and altercations; the mother of peace, charity does not love war; but rather strives by all possible means to procure union, and flies all that could engender discord: her arms are beautiful and brilliant, but never offensive; she crosses them in token of peace, seeking rather to soothe the passions of men than to irritate them; she excites men to practice in all its perfection this counsel of the Apostle: Contend not in words, for it is to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.[1] The servant of the Lord must not be a wrangler, he ought to be mild towards all men, apt to teach, patient. Admonish them, to be subject to princes, to be ready to do every good work, to speak evil of no one, not to be litigious but gentle: showing all possible mildness towards all men.[2] St. Thomas says very well on this subject: When a man enters into a discussion, let him be meek and calm, because the property of meekness is to moderate the movements of anger which closed the mind and judgment necessary to comprehend the question, and decide it well; he must be docile in order to hear the reasons of each, and must not imagine that all knowledge is contained in his own mind. Let us add to this, humility to cede the victory, and by ceding it in the proper spirit we gain another and more brilliant one. Among the famous sentences of Brother Giles, companion of St. Francis, the following is noticed as one of the most important: When any one disputes with you, if you wish to conquer regard your-

[1] Tim. ii. 14, 24. [2] Tit. iii. 1, 1, 2.

self as conquered ; if you wish to triumph condescend with sweetness to all your adversary desires. The glory of man is to avoid quarrels,[1] says the Holy Ghost by the mouth of Solomon, to yield sweetly part of our rights, and by this act of charity to prevent the little bitterness, contempts and coolnesses which these debates engender ; and it edifies the hearers ; he performs an act of humility by yielding what he obtains, or at least sustains, and in subduing the natural appetite which inclines every man to show that he has as much intellect and knowledge as his opponent, if not more, and it is this appetite rather than love of truth which generally gives rise to quarrels and discussions. It is thus the wise man acts, but the fools love to mingle in disputes ; giddy minds which have little sense or virtue, are easily heated, they pass from recreation to passion and draw matter for a quarrel from a charitable conversation. The great St. Ephrem glorified himself in his Testament for having never quarrelled with any one, but always yielded, for the maintenance of peace : behold the spirit of God and of true Christianity. Hence St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians : If any man loves to contend, it suffices to answer him, that this is not our custom, nor that of the Church of God.[2]

SECTION IX.

OF WORKS OF CHARITY.

I. Charity inclines us to do good to our neighbor.—II. Divers works of charity.—III. Practice of Father Peter Faber.

I. Charity dealeth not perversely,[3] says St. Paul ; the Greek word which he used, and the Latin word *perperam* which our version employs, is derived from the name of one of the two brothers, Perperi and Cerapis, famous in

[1] Prov. xx. iii. [2] Cor. xi. 16. [3] Ibid xiii. 4.

antiquity for their audacity and wickedness, which led them to apply themselves only to injure men. It is not thus that charity acts: how could it *do* evil when it will not even permit itself to *think* evil? It thinks only of doing good; it excites all hearts which it animates to refrain from everything that could displease the neighbor, whether by thoughts, words, signs and even looks, says St. Dorotheus; finally it orders them to abstain from all that can cause pain to any one whatever; it inflames the heart with love and tenderness for all men, that it may aid them and come to their assistance according to the best of its ability. The just are compassionate, says the Sage, they work mercy whenever an occasion presents itself. They say with Job: From my infancy mercy grew up with me; it came out with me from my mother's womb, and has always been my inseperable and dear companion. History makes mention of a pagan named Gillias, a native of Sicily, who was so charitable as to deserve this beautiful encomium: "What Gillias possesses is the common patrimony of all; his bounty would lead you to say that he had the bowels of liberality and the womb of mercy; goodness seems to have chosen his house for her dwelling, in which she prepares remedies for the evils of all the miserable." We know how ardently Titus desired to do good to all men; he regarded that day lost in which he had conferred no benefit, or given no testimony of his good will. St. Teresa resolved, even before attaining high sanctity and giving herself entirely to God, to practice daily some work of charity towards her neighbor; and when hindered by some obstacle, she would rise in the night if she heard any Religious pass in the dark, and hold a light to her, so eager was she to let no opportunity pass of rendering her neighbor a service. Plutarch relates that his daughter, who died very young, was naturally so much inclined to give and to do good, that she besought her nurse to nurse

other children whom she saw, desirous of giving them part of her own nutriment, and what she esteemed best. If nature could give this child such great sentiments and so strong an inclination to do good, what ought not grace do for the Christian? What bowels of merey should charity give him? With what love ought it to replenish his heart to excite him to assist his neighbor?

Hence St. Paul exhorting the Colossians, and with them all the faithful, says: *Put yet on as* becometh *the elect of God*, who ought to be *holy* and *beloved* of the God of charity, *the bowels of mercy, goodness, humility, modesty and vatience.*[1] We ought to remark here with St. Chrysostom, that the Apostle does not simply say: exercise mercy, but *put on mercy*, to show that we ought to be always covered with mercy, always carry it, as we are always covered with our garments. More, he does not merely say: Clothe yourself with mercy, but with the bowels of mercy; and in the Greek text it is put in the plural, *mercies*, to show the tenderness, the intimate affection with which we should succor our neighbor, for whom we ought to have bowels full of compassion for all his spiritual and corporal miseries, which we ought to solace to the best of our power. And because we cannot fulfil all these duties to our neighbor without contradicting our own inclinations, humbling and mortifying ourselves, St. Paul adds: Clothe yourself also with goodness, humility, modesty and patience. The elect are called *vessels of mercy*,[2] to receive it and to give it out. God replenishes them abundantly with this divine liquor in calling them to beatitude, but He wishes also that they pour it out on their neighbor. *They are children of oil*,[3] says Zachary; that is, they are full of the balm of charity and the oil of mercy, which the Holy Ghost spreads in their hearts, and which they pour out on their brothers by their eyes, their mouths, their hands,

[1] Col. iii. 12. [2] Romans ix. 23. [3] Zach. iv. 14.

by all the members of their body, by all the powers of their soul, as by so many canals. But let us examine more in detail in what manner this oil of mercy spereads itself.

II. Some persons use the following practices as an excellent invention to practice fraternal charity : they recommend to Our Lord all the sick and agonizing by the merits of His pains, and His agony ; all the poor, through the merits of the poverty He willed to suffer here below ; all their benefactors and those recommended to their prayers, by the merits of the charity with which He recommended on the Cross His Mother to St. John, and St. John to His Mother ; all those who have thought, said, or done anything against them, by the merits of the infinite charity which animated the prayer He made to His Father for His enemies ; all infidels, heretics and those in mortal sin, by the merits of the charity with which He converted the good thief on the Cross ; the comfort and deliverance of the souls in purgatory by the merits of the stroke of the lance that opened His side after death. These recommendations can be very usefully made to God the Father, or to the Holy Virgin, by the merits of Our Lord ; and it is well after each to say a short prayer. A holy soul in making them to the Blessed Virgin used to recite between each an *Ave Maria.*

We may on this model offer to God some good work, as a fast, a mortification, a Mass said or heard, for all men in general, and, enlarging the bosom of charity, for all creatures, to obtain what is necessary for their well-being ; for all sinners, to obtain for them grace to quit the miserable state of sin ; for all the just, that they may increase in virtue and merit ; for all the elect, that they may co-operate with their predestination and acquire the sovereign beatitude promised them ; for all superiors, ecclesiastic and secular ; for preachers and confessors, that God would fill them with His spirit to exercise worthily their ministry ; for all

the afflicted, to obtain for them patience, strength, and a remedy for their ills. St. Gertrude, not content to pray to God for the afflicted, consoled them by words, and even by letters when they were at a distance from her; she even extended her compassion to beasts, taking pity on their sufferings, through the noble motive that they were God's creatures; in this view she offered to His glory their inconveniences, by the remembrance of the excellence with which each creature has been formed and perfected in its kind; and she besought God to solace all His afflicted creatures.

III. But I can propose nothing better than what Father Lefevre, first companion of St. Ignatius, practiced. This man of God adopted the following practice in his voyages and journeys: when he arrived in any town, or when he saw one afar off, or heard its inhabitants spoken of, he immediately addressed the tutillary angel of the place and the guardian angels of those who dwelt there, beseeching them always to aid and defend them; he conjured Our Lord who dwelt in the churches of the place to deign to take His flock under His protection, to succor the miserable, to lead sinners to penance, to assist the dying and show them mercy, and finally to solace all who experienced pains of body or mind. He asked God to give them all a great abundance of graces, he thanked them for those He had already given them, in order to supply for the indifference of those who neglect the holy duty of gratitude; he asked pardon for their ingratitude and offences; he invoked the patron saints of the place, those whose relics were preserved there, that they might supply by their prayers the duties which the inhabitants neglected through ignorance or malice. Behold the excellent practice of this holy man during his long and frequent journeys. Farther, he fulfilled with great ardor the holy duties of charity,

and the works of mercy he exercised in many ways ; he bore with sweetness, without gall or sharpness, the faults of the guilty ; he dissembled most of them, and avoided hearing things that could tarnish reputation ; he was full of compassion for the afflicted, weeping with those who wept ; whatever rank they held, their evil became his ; he comforted the sad by sweet reasons and friendly words ; he succored those who were in necessity by all the means he could devise : 1, by himself, in giving them alms according to his little means ; 2, by procuring them large alms which he solicited from those who could give them, as prelates, merchants and magistrates, whom he visited for this purpose ; he addressed himself to physicians, surgeons and apothecaries to obtain their succor for the sick ; but above all, he strove to procure them succor of soul ; he served the sick in the hospitals, supported courageously all the bad odors and other inconveniences incident to their suffering condition. When he could not help them otherwise he aided them with his prayers, and like Moses, had always his hands lifted up to Heaven to buy graces for them ; he had in his mind as in a tablet all the maladies, miseries, anguish, despair and other unfortunate accidents to which men may become a prey, to intercede before God for those afflicted with them ; he besought the angel guardians of all the sick, those among the Saints who during their life had been subject to the same infirmities, to come to their assistance and to be propitious to them, and to obtain for himself an increase of strength and courage to assist them with more zeal than ever, for according to his own opinion, he never did enough for them, and he continually accused himself of this. It was thus the holy man practiced fraternal charity : he said of himself, as may be seen in his memoirs, that he had received from the Father of Mercies the bowels of mercy and charity, in which he would embrace the whole world if he could ; conformably to what

St. Macarius remarked, that the just, eminent in sanctity, are sometimes so inflamed with the fire of charity, and experience such impulses of love that they would, were it possible, shut up in their hearts all men without distinction, the good and the wicked.

Let us imitate this holy personage, or rather let us imitate the model on which he formed himself, Jesus Christ Our Lord, whose nature is goodness, says St. Leo, and whose works are mercy ; though all His divine attributes appear in His works, yet His mercy shines forth with most splendor ; for as David says, *His mercy is above all His works ;* as oil, which is a figure of it, floats on all liquors ; in fine, says St. Gregory of Nyssa, "it is the distinctive character by which Our Lord is known, and by which also we discover whether man is His image and is divine. Would you be as God to the miserable ? Succor them in their miseries." Let us then imitate God in His mercies, practicing after His example charity towards our neighbor in every possible manner ; but let us practice it especially like Jesus Christ, and when we procure our neighbor any spiritual or corporal good, let it be for the same ends Our Lord procures it with us and by us ; let it be *in the bowels of Jesus Christ,* says St. Paul, in the ardor of his love and in the sanctity of His ends.

If, as often happens, we should meet any difficulties in this exercise, let us surmount them courageously ; this will always be for us a great honor, though we should draw no other fruit from it than greater resemblance to God. If we feel cold towards some persons because we have learned that they are deceitful and unworthy to experience the effects of our good will, we should not lightly believe these charges, nor yield to the sentiments they are calculated to excite : it is better to be deceived than to fail in mercy; such deception can only be glorious and useful to us. Charity will not be much grieved when it is deceived in

judging too well of the neighbor, says St. Austin. It is related of the great patriarch of Venice, St. Lawrence Justinian, that he would much rather be deceived by a poor man, than to examine whether or not he deserved the alms he asked. Blessed Jordan, second General of the Order of St. Dominic, hearing that a beggar made a bad use of a a robe he had sent him, said these memorable words: I would rather lose a robe than lose charity. And besides, let us consider God, let us see whether He does good only to those who are worthy of it; if He bestowed His gifts only on those who employ them well, where should we be? what could we promise ourselves from His bounty? what should we presume to ask of Him? Every day and every moment He heaps countless blessings on us, on heretics, Turks, pagans, though He knows they will often become useless—or worse, be employed only to offend Him.

SECTION X.

ANOTHER EFFECT OF CHARITY—UNION AND CONCORD.

I. Happiness of Union.—II. It is one of the chief effects of Charity.—III. It ought to be in some manner like the union of the Divine Persons.

I. God is one, and by His unity He possesses an immutable and eternal being; the more anything approaches unity the more divine it is, and the more solid and durable is its being. All things subsist by their unity, this preserves and sustains them, as division would dissolve and ruin them. St. Gregory Nazianzen elegantly says: Division causes all the disorders we see in the universe; it produces thunders, earthquakes, tempests on sea, war in kingdoms, seditions in cities, troubles in families, sickness in the body, sin in the soul; while union maintains the air in its serenity, the earth in its immobility, the sea within its limits, kingdoms, cities and families in peace, the body

in health and the soul in grace. Union not only preserves things, but it fills them with joy, and renders them happy according to the nature of their being. The sojourn of happiness is called the house of peace, for peace reigns there because of the perfect and inviolable union of wills and affections. Hell is a horrible dwelling, not only because of the torments there suffered, but still more because of the disorder that reigns there. The greater our concord here below, the more closely we are united in the bonds of charity, the more we resemble the blessed and participate in their happiness. On the contrary, where there is trouble and discord, there is a sad image of hell, and men can only expect to drag out their days in weariness and pain. How good and pleasant it is to see brothers dwell together,[1] exclaims David, that is, says St. Austin, when they have only one heart and one soul, and live in the most perfect concord. The abundance of goods which they enjoy fills the prophet with admiration and impels him to cry out: How happy are brothers who are closely united! How sweet is the life they lead!

II. We cannot deny that this union ought to be one of the chief effects of charity, and he who practices charity ought to apply himself in a particular manner to establish this union and preserve it by all possible means. The Spirit of God is a spirit of peace and union, which pacifies all things by uniting them to Himself and to each other; the Spirit of the Word Incarnate is a spirit of union with man, as has been well shown in the mystery of the incarnation in which he has united Himself personally and inseparably to man: the spirit of the Christian ought then to be a spirit of union, leading him to maintain peace and union with all, after the example of the first Christians, who though of different nations and dispositions, lived in such perfect concord that St. Luke says they had only one

[1] Ps. cxxxii. 1. *Aug. in illum locum.*

heart and soul : thus was executed in them the promise which God made by Jeremiah : I will give them one heart,[1] and this famous prophecy of Isaiah was accomplished : The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and do him no injury ; the leopard will lie down with the kid ; the calf, the lion and the sheep shall dwell together. They shall not hurt and they shall not kill on Thy holy mountain ; that is, characters the most opposite in nature will be united in the Church by grace ; they will dwell together, and aid each other, without quarrel or contention. It was thus in the ark, which was the figure of the Church ; tigers, lions, and other ferocious beasts became meek and tractable.

St. Austin remarks that to this ark, the dove, the symbol of sweetness and innocence, brought an olive branch, the symbol of peace and union. We will add to this that Christians are all brothers and equals, and there ought to be no difference between them. There is neither Jew nor Greek, says St. Paul, there is neither bond nor free ; there is neither male nor female. *For you are all one in Christ ;*[2] by baptism and His grace, you are all an excellent whole before Him, all brothers, all children of the same Father, all members of the same body, all stones of the same building ; live then like brethren strictly united, like members which are all vivified by one soul, united by bones, muscles and nerves, and who have mutually the most perfect harmony. Have all a perfect conformity of will, of judgment, of all rational movement, united and fastened by the bonds of love, as stones are bound together, *built, instructed in charity,* as St. Paul says ; like the famous temple of Cizique, which was regarded as one of the wonders of the world, being built of stones perfectly fitted, and joined together by a golden thread. St. Austin, using the same comparison, says these beautiful words : When men

[1] Cap. xxxii. 39. [2] Galat. iii. 28.

forsake false religions to embrace the religion of Jesus Christ, they are by faith like wood cut in the forests, like stones drawn from the quarry to serve as materials for an edifice. When they are instructed, baptized, and after baptism more fully instructed, they are in the hands of the workmen who cut and polish and fit them ; but these stones, though cut and polished, do not yet make the house of the Lord till they are associated by charity. If the wood and stone of this Church in which I preach were not united in a certain order—if the stones were not combined in a certain manner, if they did not in some fashion love each other by their mutual union, no one would enter here because of the danger ; but the stones and wood being well bound and cemented, we enter without apprehension, we are not afraid of being crushed. Well, Our Lord wishing to enter and dwell in us, says, as if to form and build us : I give you a new commandment, love one another, be united by the bonds of charity ; it is a new precept that I give you, for till now you have been like old buildings, ruined by your divisions and disorders : as such you could not be My dwelling, I am a God of peace ; but love each other, be united, that you may repair all breaches and become a dwelling suitable for Me.

III. But Our Lord is not satisfied even with this union, it is not enough in His eyes that we love each other as brothers, that we live together in a perfect conformity as members of the same body, that we be united as stones of the same solid building, He elevates us incomparably higher, He desires a bond far more perfect, a union infinitely more strict ; He wishes that it should be in some manner like the union which exists among the three Divine Persons ; hence at the Last Supper, when He was about to quit His Apostles and go to death, He made this prayer to His Father : Holy Father, keep in Thy Name them that Thou hast given Me, that they may be one as we *also are one ;* as

we have a simple and indivisible unity of understanding, thought, judgment, opinion, will, affections, that they may have a perfect and intimate union in all these things ; and that they may be one in us, that the world, by seeing souls so perfectly united, minds so closely fastened together, and judging rightly that such a union cannot come from nature, but must come from on high, *may know that Thou hast sent Me*,[1] and that I am the Lord and the Messiah. Our Lord could not go any farther, or speak more strongly.

SECTION XI.

CONCLUSION.

I. Resolutions.—II. Means to preserve union.—III.—Conclusion.

I. Let us then cherish union and concord, and use our best efforts to preserve it inviolable among us. Before all things have among you continual charity,[2] says St. Peter. If you desire to console me in my troubles, if you would prove to me that you participate in my spirit; in fine, if you have any tenderness and compassion for me, *render full* the joy you have caused me when you received the faith I preached to you, by having one mind, one soul, and the same sentiments, in such a manner that you will do nothing by a *spirit of contention*, and that nothing may ever interrupt this union. Labor with care to preserve unity of spirit in the *bond of peace*, as you are all members of one body, called to the same grace during this life, and to the same hope[3] of glory in the other, since you are all called to the same vocation, having one Lord, one faith, one baptism.[4] I beseech you, said his disciple St. Ignatius, to the Trallians, not I but the charity of Jesus Christ, to have no division among you, but to have perfect union. Let there

[1] John xvii. [2] Peter iv. 8. [3] Phil. ii. 1. [4] Eph. iv. 3.

be among you a divine union, wrote the same Saint to the people of Magnesia ; to the Ephesians he says : Your concord, the mutual union which reigns among you, must enrage the devil, ruin his tyranny, overthow his wicked designs. O, my dear brethren, hold for certain that there is nothing better or more excellent than the peace of Jesus Christ, which He has so much recommended, and which He desires us to practice after His example and in His spirit. O children, raised and nourished for heaven! cries out St. Austin, O citizens of Jerusalem, vision of peace! all who love peace shall participate in the benedictions and joys of this blessed city ; let us seek peace, let us desire it, peace in our houses, in our business, with our families, with our children, with our servants, with our friends and with our enemies. It was thus that the ancient Christians, as we have already remarked, lived together in perfect peace ; the deacon was accustomed to say at holy Mass as we see in all the liturgies : *Peace be to all and among all.* When these words were pronounced, says St. Clement, all the people embraced each other, the men embraced the men, the women embraced the women, in token of peace and concord. St. Athanasius relates that the Religions who followed the guidance of St. Antony had so much love for each other, that among them all, a large number, one could not be found who said or did anything to pain another. What St. Climacus says of the famous monastery near Alexandria, deserves to be quoted: The Religious were united among themselves by the bonds of such ardent charity, that it is impossible to imagine greater perfection. If there happened sometimes a slight disagreement, the first who perceived it appeased it by a sign, if a sign did not suffice he cast himself on his knees before the disputants as a suppliant, and immediately they surrendered and separated ; but if their ill feelings went farther, the Abbot sent them to a neighboring house in exile, saying

that he did not want to have two demons in the monastery; that is, a visible demon who gives himself up to anger, and an invisible demon who tempts them. It is thus we ought to cherish, and strive to procure, union and peace.

II. But for this end we must study the means. St. Paul teaches them in his epistle to the Philippians, where after having earnestly recommended peace, he adds: Do nothing by vain glory, but take humility for the guide of your actions and, enlightened with its lights, *think that each is* in some manner *better than you;* regard not your own interests but those of others. The Apostle shows us by these words the two principal sources whence flow all the divisions which disturb peace, and disunite spirits, the desire of glory, and interest. And effectually he who is tormented by these passions bears always a torch in hand to kindle war wherever he can to bring about his own ends. When in a conference one is heated or angry, and that this precious peace which ought always keep us intimately united comes to be disturbed, is it not the passion for honor and the desire of vanquishing others that produce these sad effects? And is it not in covetousness and self-interest that lawsuits, hatreds and divisions so detrimental to peace, take rise? Let us retrench this disorderly affection for temporal goods, let us have sincere humility and we shall easily preserve peace. The Abbot Joseph, in Cassian, furnishes us with many means some of which refer to those of the Apostle. The first is to detach the heart from affection to terrestrial things; for is it not an unworthy thing, says he, and even an impiety, that those who have renounced all property and possession in earthly things, (he speaks of Religious) prefer a little movable they have in their cell, and of which they are allowed only the use, to the precious treasure of fraternal charity? The second means is not to be too much attached to your will and opinion, but to give them up when charity is in danger of being wounded by

maintaining them. The words of the third means ought to be engraven on marble and still more on all hearts: Man should know that all things, even the most useful and necessary, ought to be ceded for the sake of peace and charity. Finally, let us not permit any thing in the world to excite us to anger, but invariably preserve perfect tranquility.

III. Let us conclude, 1, that we must love and esteem above all things peace and concord, founding this esteem and love on the reasons given above; 2, that we must procure this peace by all possible means, and willingly purchase it at any price: in effect, it is preferable to all we can give to purchase it; for it is always incomparably more sweet and precious than war. We must afterwards preserve it carefully by our actions and words, never saying anything that could offend or enrage minds; on the contrary, fomenting incessantly among ourselves the sacred fire of love, uniting hearts more closely, and like the dove of the ark, carrying everywhere the olive branch of peace. St. Peter Chrysologus tells us this in words full of sweetness and strength: We must guard peace more carefully than any other virtue, because God makes His abode in peace, and by preserving it we maintain ourselves in the possession of God, and consequently of all good. We see that nature makes extraordinary efforts to hinder the dissolution of her parts: water leaps up into the air against its nature, fire does violence to its natural tendencies to precipitate itself below, in order to hinder this dissolution; grace should have a similar power over us to make us operate those great and difficult things, to cause us to mount and descend, to do violence to our disposition, in order to maintain peace among ourselves and hinder all divisions.

If the bonds of peace are broken, we must employ all our ingenuity to re-establish union, to re-fasten the sacred

bonds of concord, and even expose ourselves to suffer for the good of peace. The Emperor Basil has left us a memorable example of this. Seeing the Oriental Church greatly agitated, and horribly torn, chiefly by Photius, he made this beautiful discourse before the eighth Ecumenical Council, assembled in the city of Constantinople: See me a suppliant before you, I cast myself on the ground, despising my purple and my diadem; ascend to my face, walk on my eyes, trample the shoulders of the first monarch of the earth, be daring enough to tread under foot the head on which God has placed the crown of the empire, I am ready to suffer all, I fear no confusion, I make no account of my glory, provided I see you all united, and peace restored to the Church. St. Gregory Nazianzen gave a similar example in the same city, in a great commotion which took place among the Bishops assembled there to promote him to the dignity of Patriarch; he conjured them by the Holy Trinity to admit no division, saying that if he were the cause of dissention, he deserved to be treated as was the Prophet Jonas: Cast me into the sea, said he, that the tempest may be appeased; I will gladly endure whatever you may inflict on me, though you cannot be ignorant of my innocence. Deprive me of my authority, chase me from my throne, banish me from the city, I am satisfied, if you cannot otherwise agree; I only beseech you to love truth and peace. This holy person did as he said, he quitted his dignity without constraint, and departed out of Constantinople that peace might enter it, of which he was so passionately enamoured that he wrote these beautiful words: O, sweet peace, my well-beloved friend my only desire and my sole ornament!

All who truly love peace ought to do the same, contributing as much as possible to preserve it in its integrity, and to restore it if it be wounded. If notwithstanding all their solicitude they cannot accomplish this, they must re-

cur to the God of peace, and like the angels of whom Isaiah speaks, beseech Him by their prayers and tears to heal the ulcerated hearts of those who disagree. Let us conclude by these words of St. Paul to the Romans: Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of one mind towards one another, according to Jesus Christ.[1]

SECTION XII.

ANOTHER EFFECT OF CHARITY.—IT SUPPORTS THE DEFECTS OF THE NEIGHBOR.

I. There is no man faultless.—II. We must bear each other's burdens.—III. The example of Jesus Christ ought to excite us to this.—IV. It is the model God has given us.

I. Whoever desires to fulfil the duties of charity must necessarily resolve to fulfil the duties of patience. Thus the Apostle tells us that charity is patient. But the better to comprehend this truth, it must be borne in mind that there is no man on earth, whatever be his rank or condition, so perfect as to be free from defects. This is found only in Heaven where things attain the highest degree of their perfections; but on earth, as Aristotle wisely remarks, all is composed of action and power; that is, of perfection and imperfection, and everything that has motion is partly at the point of departure, and partly at the term of arrival, which each may desire to attain but cannot attain here. The most perfect are those who have the fewest defects. And though the holy Scriptures and the writings of the Doctors may say, in speaking of great and excellent persons, that they have been perfect; this means that they have attained such perfection as can be attained here below, that is to say, a perfection mingled with many miseries and imperfections. Philosophers teach that fig-

[1] Romans xv. 5.

ures can be perfect in two manners : mathematically, when they are perfect in all the strictness of the terms, and physically, when their perfection has not this degree of justness. Thus they say, the earth is round physically but not mathematically, because of the mountains and valleys which render its surface unequal, yet it passes for round, because these eminences and depressions are not perceptible on so vast a mass ; but the heavens are perfectly round, according to all the laws of mathematics. As heaven is a perfect sphere, (a sphere represents perfection because it is the most perfect figure,) and the earth only imperfectly spherical, so it is only in heaven that we shall find entire perfection of body and soul ; here below perfection is always mixed with imperfection. Days have their nights, lights their shades, roses their thorns. Where is the man however holy and virtuous who must not acknowledge himself a sinner? Who is he that falls not daily into some imperfection? Who is there that does not contract some stain? *If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us*,[1] said one of the most perfect men, an Apostle, the disciple whom Jesus loved.

II. Since no one in this life is entirely perfect, no one without something imperfect in body and soul, in the order of nature or that of grace, we ought to conclude that there is no one who does not give others something to endure. To will that it should be otherwise, that men should be more perfect, would be to judge Divine Providence and resist His designs which it is our duty to follow and not to guide. If we wish to do right, says Seneca, we ought to follow, with a docile spirit and without murmur, God who is the source of all. What pleases this sovereign and infinite wisdom, ought also to please man. God wills men as they are, or at least He suffers them : it is just that we should do the same ; but for this we must follow the move-

[1] John i. 8.

ments of charity, which disposes our hearts to suffer with patience the defects of others; this is its work and the effect of its power. The more we love a person, the easier it will be for us to support his defects; the less we love him, the less we will bear from him. *Bear one another's burdens*, says St. Paul, support the bad humor, the antipathy, the sickness, the passion, the sins of others, *and you will accomplish the law of Jesus Christ.*[1] What is this law if not the law of charity? demands St. Austin. Who bear each other's burdens? They who have charity. Those who have not charity are mutually insupportable; but those who possess this virtue, support and solace each other.[2] This holy Doctor, explaining the above text, adduces an excellent comparison. He says that naturalists relate that when stags pass over an arm of the sea to seek fresh pastures on any island, they observe this order: Their horns being very heavy, they put themselves all in a line one after another, and each one rests his head upon that which precedes him, and so they all swim after this manner without being at all fatigued, except the first which carries its head in the air, and willingly bears the burden for the ease of its companions, But that this one should not have all the trouble, as soon as it grows weary, it passes behind and becomes the last, and that which followed it conducts the rests, and thus they change place by turns till they get to the other side. They cross the sea without shipwreck because their vessel is charity.[3]

Thus we ought to act towards our neighbor; to bear his defects with sweet patience and tranquility, to support his coarse, wearisome manners, his spiritual and corporal imperfections, by viewing all in the order of God and in the sweetness of Christian charity. If natural love, when it is well enkindled in the heart, not only renders endurable the defects of the person beloved, but makes them

[1] Galat. vi. 2. [2] In Psalm xii. 9. [3] Ibid.

agreeable to us, as we see in mothers with regard to their children ; supernatural love, which is incomparably more powerful and nobler, ought to have at least as much power to enable us to support with sweetness the defects of our neighbor. If a mother, as St. Dorotheus very well says, brings forth a deformed child, she does not detest it on account of its deformity ; on the contrary, she cherishes it with maternal affection, she strives the more earnestly to make up in various ways for the grace and beauty which nature refused it ; so we ought never despise our neighbor, whatever may be his defects and imperfections ; we ought to support him as he is, and even go farther, to adorn and embellish him in some manner by our good example, our prayers and our unvarying kindness. But let us follow the similitude of the members of the body, we being effectively the members of a very excellent body. What do the members do one for another ? What mutual support, what tenderness, what compassion ! If a man is wounded in the foot, though it is the lowest part of the body, though the wound be hideous and its stench intolerable, the other members have no horror of it, they do not cut it off ; on the contrary, the eye regards it with pity, the hands bathe it, poultice it, and bandage it as neatly as they can ; the tongue asks remedies for it from men, from God and the Saints ; in fine, all the members do all in their power to solace and relieve it. Members of Jesus Christ, members of a body whose heart is love, love each other, support each other's infirmities, be not scandalized at each other's imperfections ! Support one another, says St. Paul, with charity, humility, sweetness and patience, or, as he says elsewhere, support the defects of your brother with the bowels of mercy.

III. The example of God, who supports with such patience and sweetness the imperfections and sins of men ought to excite us powerfully to do likewise ; and is it not

just that we, poor worms of the earth, should endure with humility from our equals what the Divine Majesty suffers with such condescension from His creatures? It is said of St. Macarius that he appeared as a divinity on earth, because of the admirable charity with which he bore the defects of his neighbor, a virtue which he practiced by excellence. What an amiable quality! What a glorious title! The example of Our Lord leaves us no excuse. With what charity and compassion He supported the defects of those with whom He treated!—with what goodness He accommodated Himself to their dispositions!—with what mercy He endured their malice! St. Cyprian, considering the conduct of Jesus Christ to the Jews, says these admirable words: "What equanimity and patience did not Jesus Christ evince in conversing with the Jews to break the hardness of the incredulous by lively persuasions, in order to make them embrace the truths he preached, to surmount their ingratitude by the number of benefits! How sweet His answers to those who contradicted Him!—how patiently He endured the insolence of proud minds, ceding humbly to His persecutors!—what constancy, till His last breath, to attract to Him those who had massacred the prophets, and who had always been rebellious to the will of God!" Speaking of Judas, the same Father adds: "He supported with long and wonderful patience the wicked disposition and crimes of Judas; and though He knew his malice well, and saw in his heart the treason he meditated, He did not drive him from His presence, He did not deprive him of the dignity of an Apostle; He showed him no sign of displeasure, He spoke not one angry word, but He made him sit at table with Himself like the other Apostles, allowed him to put his hand in the dish with Him, showed him tenderness on all occasions, washed his feet, permitted Himself to be kissed by his in-

famous mouth, and at the very moment of his monstrous treasons spoke to him these loving words : My friend, why art thou come ?" What goodness! what patience! Though the Apostles were not guilty of such great crimes as Judas, yet they were of base extraction, fishermen for the most part, coarsely reared; there were many things in their manners, words, and in a corporal and spiritual point of view very difficult to be borne, yet Our Lord never treated them harshly nor reproved them severely. He never said a word to them that could cause them any pain ; He never appeared to think their conversation tedious, their manner rude and unpolished, or that He experienced pain in enenduring their defects ; He supported them always with unalterable patience and sweetness ; He spoke to them only charitable words ; He consoled them with the tenderness of a mother ; He admonished them of their defects in the sweetest manner ; and He acted thus not only towards the Apostles but towards all men : He supported the defects of all with the same sauvity and tenderness.

IV. Let us imitate Jesus Christ, since He is the model the Heavenly Father has given us ; let us support each other with the same goodness and sweetness that He supports us. Support the weaknesses and defects of your brothers, wrote St. Ignatius to St. Polycarp, as Our Lord supports yours. Let us accomplish Christian charity in so important a point, suffering with patience and meekness the spiritual and corporal defects of our neighbor ; let us strive not to be disedified nor angry when we find in him a disposition contrary to ours, and when we shall be fatigued by his weary importunites, by indiscreet questions, by impertinent replies, by coarse, uncivil manners ; let us not for all this lose the great treasure of charity ; let us not yield to trouble, impatience or weariness, lest in the confusion of these different movements we become excited, and so to displease our neighbor ; but let us listen with tran-

quility of heart and serenity of countenance; let us reply with affable words; let us succor the neighbor, support him in his defects, regard these defects with eyes of mercy as the inseparable appendage of our nature, as necessary miseries, as evils which are more prejudicial to him than to us, and for us a matter to exercise our charity, an occasion of merit, a subject of patience.

SECTION XIII.

ANOTHER EFFECT OF FRATERNAL CHARITY—ZEAL FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS.

I. Excellence of Zeal.—II. The profit it procures us.—III. It is one of the greatest effects of divine love.—IV. Our Lord gives this zeal to loving souls.—V. Examples.

Zeal for the salvation of souls is the greatest and most important effect of Christian charity, because it regards eternity; it tends to rescue the neighbor from sovereign misfortune and procures him sovereign happiness. If to love is to procure good, as we have often said, it is certain that the greatest testimony of love we can give any one is to free him from the torments of hell, and procure him the riches, honors and joys of Paradise; since it hinders the greatest of evils and procures the greatest of goods. Let us see some of the reasons which can give us love and courage for this holy exercise.

I. The first is taken from the excellence of zeal, which St. Denis elevates so high that he fears not to say, that of all divine things the most divine is to co-operate with God for the salvation of souls. There is no sacrifice more pleasing to the All-powerful God, says St. Gregory the Great, than zeal for the salvation of souls, because, as St. Thomas remarks, "There is nothing in the universe greater than the salvation of a soul, it being the most excellent of

creatures, the living image of God that is snatched from eternal sufferings and placed in the highest glory, freed from the abyss of evils and raised to the eternal enjoyment of all goods," a transition but feebly figured in the deliverance of Louis XII. from an obscure prisoner and his elevation to the throne of France, or that of the famous Matthias Huniade, whose irons were knocked off at Prague, to be exchanged for the crown of Hungary. St. Chrysostom had said, before St. Thomas: There is nothing under heaven comparable to the beauty of a human soul; the whole world and all its treasures do not approach it in value: hence should you give all your goods to the poor, you do nothing in comparison to him who converts a single soul.

II. Zeal for the salvation of the neighbor is extremely profitable to him who exercises it, and acquires him great merit. *My brethren,* says St. James, *if any of you err from truth, and one convert him: know that he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.*[1] Alms deliver from death, said the Angel Raphael to Tobias, *purify the soul from sin, and render it worthy of mercy and eternal life.*[2] If corporal alms are so agreeable to God, if they confer such great goods on him who bestows them, what must be the merit of spiritual alms which surpass them as much as the soul does the body, and are therefore incomparably more excellent! St. Gregory, having cited the text of St. James, adds: If it is so meritorious to deliver a body from death, which must one day overtake it, what riches, what recompenses are prepared for that charity which rescues a soul from eternal death and places it in the bosom of eternal happiness?[1] If we praise so highly the memorable action of St. Paulinus in becoming a slave to rescue from captivity the son of a poor widow, though

[1] James, v. 19. [2] Tobias, xii. 9.

he only restored him liberty without making him wiser, richer or more powerful; is not the action of him who delivers a soul from the tyranny of sin, the slavery of the demon, from prisons in which he is not yet, but into which he should be inevitably precipitated, to make him enjoy the lights of grace, the liberty of the children of God, and hereafter eternal happiness, incomparably more admirable, and deserving of a greater recompense? Does it not procure the soul a good infinitely greater, though the means be more easy? Can there be any benefit equal to it? If God promises mercy to those who show mercy to their brothers, how abundantly will He not show it to those who exercise it in so elevated a manner? With what grace here, and glory hereafter, will they be overwhelmed? St. Paul calls the Philippians *his joy and his crown*,[2] because he had snatched them from paths of error and perdition to place them in the way of truth and salvation.

III. But the motive which ought to touch us most, as the noblest and that which most surely leads to our end, is, that zeal for the salvation of souls is one of the greatest effects of the love we bear to Jesus Christ. Our Lord, designing to teach this truth to St. Peter, and after him to all the faithful, said: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these? Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee, returned Simon. If so, continued our Lord, *feed my sheep*, thus will you testify the love you bear Me. And in effect he who loves Our Lord, ought necessarily love souls and have great zeal for their salvation, since he knows that this divine Saviour loved them so tenderly, acquired them by so many labors and purchased them at the price of all His Blood; that if they are saved they will praise, honor, love and serve Him forever; and that if they have the misfortune to be lost, they will blaspheme His Holy Name for all eternity. If we loved this Divine Master we should with-

[1] Lib. 19. Mor. cap. 12. [2] Phil. iv. 1.

out doubt use all our efforts to show it in so important a matter; we would be inflamed with a desire to procure Him these praises, this honor, this love, to hinder these maledictions and blasphemies, to preserve to Him the creatures which have cost Him so much, which He loves so tenderly, and not to permit them to be allured by His enemies. St. Bonaventure says of St. Francis that he would not believe that he truly possessed the love of God, Our Lord, if he loved not souls ransomed by His Blood. Hence he said there was no good work, no exercise preferable to zeal for the salvation of souls, and in proof of this he alleged that the Son of God descended from heaven to earth, became man, labored many years, and joyfully gave His life to ransom souls.

IV. Thus Our Lord always fills with zeal, for the neighbor's salvation, souls captivated by His love; He arouses them from the sleep of prayer and contemplation to apply to the holy exercises of zeal. I sleep and my heart watcheth, says the Spouse; I repose in sweet and pleasing discourse with Him I love, or as St. Austin explains it, "retired from the noise of men and the embarrassment of external things, I occupy my mind in the silence of tranquil solitude, in the exercises of wisdom, to think of Thee, to contemplate with love that Thou art my Saviour: but while the Spouse is ravished with these celestial delights, her Beloved knocks at the door and says: *What I say to you in the luminous darkness* of contemplation, preach openly, and what you hear in the ear preach from *the housetops*. He calls the Spouse, saying: Open to Me, My Sister, My friend, My dove, My beautiful one; for My head is full of dew and My locks of the drops of the night, as if He said: Thou enjoyest a sweet repose, and the door is closed against Me; thou thinkest only of thy own salvation, while torrents of iniquity inundate the earth, and the charity of the multitude grows cold; for the drops of the

night, that is, the number of sins, by falling on My head, by attacking My Divinity, chill My love. Open to Me then thou who art My Sister by the participation of My Blood, who art united to Me by the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation, who art My dove by the purity I have communicated to thee, who art all beautiful by the words thou hast heard from My mouth in the sweet repose of thy solitude; open the door to Me that I may enter; announce My love, publish My gospel and My mysteries, cause Me to be known and loved by thy brethren.[1]" Such are the words of St. Austin who says elsewhere, that love attaches a man to the exercises of contemplation but not in such a manner as to render him insensible to the necessities of his neighbor; when he learns that a neighbor experiences this necessity he quits them to succor him and in him Our Lord. If you saw your friend pressed by hunger, thirst, or any other want, if you saw him on the brink of a precipice, would you amuse yourself in looking at him, praising him, offering him your services? Would you not rather strive to supply his necessities, and rescue him from his danger? You certainly would. Well, Our Lord, our true and perfect friend, is tormented by hunger and thirst; He is sick, He suffers in the body or soul of our neighbor; we do not show our love for Him by looking at Him, by contemplating Him, by inflaming ourselves interiorly with His love, and then leaving Him in this unhappy state; this would be to do things out of time; all eternity is given us for the exercise of contemplation, we shall have plenty of time to apply to it there, it is necessary that part of this life be consecrated to action.

V. St. Francis, pressed by an ardent desire to please Our Lord, whom he loved so tenderly, was one day in great anxiety, not knowing by what means he could most perfectly please Him; whether by prayer and retreat, or

[1] Tract. 57, in Joan.

by preaching and communication with the neighbors. Unsettled by these doubts, and not wishing to decide by himself in so important a matter, he asked advice of those whom he considered the best instructed of his Religious, and setting before them the reasons for and against the questions which agitated him, he said to them: "You know that I am unlettered, I have not read many great books, it seems to me that I have more disposition for prayer than action, and that I have received greater graces for speaking to God than for speaking to men. Moreover, prayer is a source of merit, we there find wonderful profit, we there amass treasures of celestial riches; by it we converse with God and unite ourselves to Him; it is a powerful means to purify the affections and to enable us to lead on earth an angelic life: on the contrary, preaching and commerce with men are very distracting, and whatever care one takes, it is almost impossible not to contract some light stains, and not to experience some diminution of devotion. These reasons incline me to prayer, and make me think that it would be better for me to retire into solitude, than to labor among men. But there is one thing which is a counterpoise to all this; it is the example of Our Lord who quitted the Bosom of His Father to procure, by words and by all sort of means, the salvation of men. Whence I conclude that it is more expedient for me to conform to this Divine Model, to quit the repose and the joys of contemplation in order to labor for the conversion and salvation of souls." Yet despite the force of this reasoning he demands of his Religious not only their advice but also the help of their prayers. He even sent to St. Clare to beseech her to pray for him in this difficulty, and to beg light for him. When the Religious returned with the answer, the Saint knelt down, bent his head towards the earth, crossed his hands and said: Well, what does my Lord Jesus Christ command me? He commands you, said the Religious to

leave the delights of solitude, that you may labor to save souls, and to instruct them as well as you can. At these words, this great Saint rose up, and inflamed with immense ardor, traversed the country with such haste that none of his Religious could keep up with him: he applied himself from that moment to the salvation of his neighbor, and his zeal became so great that he even crossed the sea to convert infidels.

St. Teresa, experiencing the same anxiety, tells us how she was delivered from it: "Thinking one day with what purity and innocence one may live when not obliged to transact business, or converse with men, and how many faults I should commit if I undertook these things, Our Lord spoke to me as follows: You cannot do otherwise, My Daughter; be only attentive to have pure intentions, to keep your eyes fixed on Me, that your actions may be as far as possible conformable to Mine. Another time, considering within me, whether it would not be more advantageous to neglect the care of others in order to apply myself entirely to prayer, He said to me: During this life, the point is, not to enjoy Me, but to do My will."

St. Philip Neri feeling a great attraction to solitude and contemplation, and fearing there was in this attrait some delusion or imperfections, prayed Our Lord to make known to him the life He desired that he should embrace, to be most pleasing to Him and to serve Him; St. John Baptist appeared to him, and he felt in his soul after this vision a strong inclination to labor not only for his own salvation, but also for that of others. Some time after, he was fortified in this design by another vision; he saw two souls clothed with glory, one of whom held a hard loaf in his hand which he seemed to eat without any other food, and he heard these words: "Philip, the will of God is that you live in this city as if you lived in a desert." The Saint then applied himself with much ardor and success to the salva-

tion of souls. And as in order to satisfy the eagerness of those who put themselves under his guidance he could not give to prayer as much time as he desired; he was accustomed to say that there was nothing more pleasing to the soul that truly loved God than to leave Him for love of Himself. Yet in the midst of his occupations, his heart was continually united to this divine treasure; on every occasion he raised his heart to God; he was even obliged to repress the too vehement ardor of his love: otherwise he had nearly always been in ecstacy, and his body raised from the earth.

Thus has the love of Our Lord inflamed the Saints with zeal for the salvation of souls, and caused them to divide their care between communication with God, and communication with men to lead them to God. It is this love that tore the anchorites from their deserts when they saw the Church in danger. It made St. Antony quit his dear solitude and repair to Alexandria, to assure the people of that city that the Arians were the enemies of the Son of God; that Athanasius, their Bishop, was His faithful minister, and that it was from his mouth they should learn the oracles of truth. The same love made the renowned Aphrates abandon his monastery, where he lived in great sanctity, to show himself at Antioch in the time of the Emperor Valens. This wicked prince having asked him how a man like him who had embraced a monastic and hidden life, could go through the streets and frequent houses, speaking to every one, he replied by this famous similitude: If I were a young girl, delicately nurtured in my father's house, and if, being retired in my apartment, I should see some incendiary attempt to set your Majesty's palace on fire, ought I to remain with my arms crossed watching the progress of the flames of which I myself might soon become the prey? Ought I not forget the tenderness of my age and sex and give the alarm, and bring

water to extinguish it? If your Majesty judges that this ought to be my conduct in such a contingency, be not surprised to see me now in the midst of Antioch; for the open profession that this city makes of Arianism, by sustaining Arians and persecuting violently those who defend the true faith, having set on fire the Church which is the house of my Father, I have come out of my cell, I have quitted my repose, to work against this fire and if possible to extinguish it.

SECTION XIV.

CONTINUATION.

I. Means of practising zeal.—II. All can practise it.

I. Urged by the force of these reasons, we ought to enkindle within us an ardent zeal for the salvation of souls, and strive to procure it by all possible means, each according to his condition and capacity. What are these means? They are, first, sermons, confession, good instructions, the administration of the sacraments, the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and all other exercises which, immediately and by their own nature, conduct souls to God and obtain or confer grace; second, good example, prayers, alms, mortifications and generally all good works done for this end; third, we may co-operate towards the salvation of souls by prayer, and by succoring spiritually or temporally those who labor for the salvation of souls. St. Paul praises the Philippians who had sent Epaphroditus, their Bishop, to bring him some succors of which he had need, and who by this means labored for the progress of the Gospel. And it must be remarked that they had a share in all the good the Apostle wrought, aided by these helps, according to the words of Our Lord: He who receiveth a prophet, or a

preacher, in the name of a prophet, shall receive the reward of a prophet. St. Gregory gives the reason of this; "Because," says he, "whoever gives to a prophet food and other necessaries, considering him as a prophet, gives him means to fulfil his ministry." Then he compares persons who thus concur in the salvation of souls, to the elms spoken of by Isaiah, and which God promised to plant in His Church: "for as the elm bears no fruit, but sustains the vine which bears fruit, so the simple faithful who sustain apostolic men and thus enable them to preach, confess and labor for the salvation of souls in functions which they themselves could not exercise—share the labors by being a support to those who perform them, as the elm helps to bear grapes by supporting the vine."

II. Thus all can labor in the salvation of souls, in some manner or other. "Let no one say," observes St. Gregory, "I am no preacher, I have not sufficient knowledge to give instructions; do at least what you can, draw others after you in the ways of the Lord, desire to have companions of your happiness. If you go to God strive not to go alone, for it is written: Let him that heareth, say, come. Let us all celebrate the Lord, let us exalt the sanctity of His Holy Name." "The Son of God the Incarnate Wisdom has friends," says St. Austin, "but what do His friends say? *magnify with me the Lord*,[1] I do not wish to glorify Him alone, I do not wish that I alone should possess Him; hence my brethren, enkindle within you the love of Our Lord, inflame your hearts with this beautiful fire, cry to your parents, your friends, and all who approach you: Magnify the Lord with me; if you love God, draw to His love all hearts dear to you, bring your whole house to Jesus: you conduct a friend to the theatre to see an actor who pleases you; well, if you love Jesus, conduct, attract, draw all you can to Jesus Christ. He will show them excellent

[1] Ps. 33. 4.

things which will ravish them with admiration." St. Chrysostom, the oracle of the Greek Church, treating this subject, says, in speaking of St. Paul: "This heroic soul embraced the whole world in the bosom of his charity, and had for all men more love than a father has for his children. The desire he had for their salvation seemed to give him wings to fly everywhere in order to save them all. Knowing that Our Lord said to St. Peter: If you love Me, feed My sheep, and exacted of him this testimony of his love, it is impossible to explain with what zeal and ardor he labored for the salvation of souls. We must imitate him; and if we cannot, like him, run over provinces to save all men, at least let each of us undertake to banish vice from our own household and cause the love and fear of God to reign there; let each excite his parents, friends and neighbors to virtue; let each enkindle wherever he can the desire of perfection."

The Spouse is often called *dove* in the Canticles, and not without a particular reason. St. Basil says that formerly certain doves were trained and their wings perfumed, that mingling with such as were wild they might by the sweetness of the perfume attract them to the dove-cot: hence Aristotle calls them, attracting doves. The Spouse ought to become a dove of this nature, and draw to her Beloved as many souls as she can by the agreeable odor of good words and virtuous actions. We can do this better than we think; there is no one of any condition whatever who cannot succeed in it, if he permits himself to be guided by God, and will co-operate with grace. Have we not known many women who without knowledge or eloquence have drawn their husbands from vice, and been the cause of their salvation? What instrument did God use to convert Patricius?—His holy wife, St. Monica. To whom did St. Adrian owe the strength with which he bore the torments of his martyrdom?—To his wife, St. Natalia. The noble

Valerian took the resolution to abjure paganism and embrace Christianity at the persuasion of St. Cecilia. Let us say more : many women have been, after God, the first cause of the conversion of entire nations. The conversion of the Goths in Spain is due to Ingunda ; that of the Lombards in Italy to Theolinda; that of the infidel people near the Black Sea to a poor servant named Christina. The English and their King Ethelbert owed their conversion to Queen Bertha, a French princess ; and the French owe theirs to St. Clotilda, wife of King Clovis. We can all, if we will, labor for the salvation of our neighbor, and be of great assistance to him in this important business : but as there are some more especially destined to this sublime function, we must for the sake of such enter more into detail and show them the qualities necessary to fulfill well so grand a ministry.

SECTION XV.

VIRTUE REQUISITE FOR THOSE WHO LABOR IN THE SALVATION OF SOULS.

I. Several virtues are necessary.—II. A great love for sinners.—III. We ought to love them for themselves.—IV. Examples.

I. To form the human body, there must be many parts and many members, different in shape and use ; so to form an apostolic man proper to convert souls there must be many different virtues, which are, as it were, members, and as all the members are not equally necessary or useful to the body, some being much nobler than others, as the heart, the brain, the liver, hence called the nobler parts; so of the virtues which ought to organize the apostolic man; all have not the same degree of necessity or utility, some serve only to render him more perfect, if I may say so,

while others are absolutely necessary, and serve to form him as noble and essential parts. We shall speak only of the latter.

II. The first is a great love for sinners and an ardent zeal for their salvation; for as love is the first mover of our affections, and the spring which sets all our powers in motion, the love of sinners ought to be in the apostolic man the cause of all he undertakes for their salvation; he must enkindle it within him from the fire with which Our Lord burned for them, and with which He loves them. Yes, truly, Our Lord loves sinners, says St. Austin; for if He loved them not, He had never descended from heaven to ransom them. And indeed He must have loved them, else He had not assumed their nature, charged Himself with their miseries, labored for thirty-three years, and died on a Cross for them. It even seems that He was in some manner obliged to love them; for, according to some theologians, the mystery of the Incarnation had never been accomplished had not Adam fallen, and in him his posterity. If this be so, Our Lord is in some manner indebted to sinners for the sovereign excellence and infinite grandeur which His Holy Humanity possesses by the hypostatic union, since without them, it had not been thus elevated. This is the reasoning St. Anselm uses to convince the Blessed Virgin that she ought to love sinners. And the Church sings: You cannot, O Holy Virgin, abhor sinners, since but for them you had never had the honor of being the Mother of such a Son. Moreover, Our Lord loves sinners as His creatures, as weak and sick members of His Body, as the cause of His combats and sufferings, as the price of His victories, as the treasures which cost Him His life: since Our Lord loves them thus, the same reasons should excite all apostolic men to love them; and after the example of their Divine Master and for His interests, they should do all in their power to draw them from the miser-

able state of sin, and cause them to re-enter the blessed state of grace.

III. Farther, we ought to love sinners for themselves; charity ought to excite in our hearts sentiments of compassion at the sight of their miseries, the great goods they lose and will lose eternally, the misfortunes of which they are the prey, and the far worse misfortunes which they purchase for themselves in another life. A spectacle so sad and lamentable must excite in the heart of the apostolic man movements of compassion, and inflame him with a desire to remedy it as far as he can. The loss of a soul is so great a misfortune, that it would be better if the whole world and all possible worlds should be annihilated, than that one soul should perish.

The cruel Emperor Nero viewed through an emerald the burning of Rome, and saw with delight the blood of its best citizens flowing through its streets; such spectacles gave him most joy. Let us consider souls in a manner wholly different, let us regard the loss of a soul through the love Jesus Christ bears it, through His Blood with which He ransomed it, through the charity we ought to have for it, through the infinite torments it must suffer in the other life if we do not strive to rescue it. Ah, God, what a sight! Is there a man so inhuman or so unnatural as not to be moved by it, and not to fly to the rescue with all possible speed? When a blind man is on the brink of a precipice, the most wicked of those who see him run to him, stop him and put him on the right road. A mariner who is making a good voyage stops, goes out of his way, to assist those who have been shipwrecked. I say with St. Bernard: An ass falls, and many run to raise him up; a soul falls and precipitates itself into hell, and no one troubles himself to rescue it. Far different should be the conduct of an apostolic man. He must come and go, he must ask, pray and conjure, he must employ all possible means

to hinder this great misfortune, and to bring back this erring soul to the ways of life.

IV. Every one knows with what admirable zeal St. John the Evangelist sought the young man whom he had brought up in the fear of God, and who afterwards associated himself with robbers: what holy artifice the Saint used, with what sweetness, what tenderness, what compassion he spoke to him, and even clasped his hands stained with thefts and homicides, in order that he might move him by these testimonies of affection, open his heart to penance and tear him from the precipice. St. Ephrem relates the artifices St. Abraham the Hermit used to convert his niece Mary, who, after having led a holy life for twenty years, had fallen away. He dressed like a soldier, made a long journey on horseback to seek her, and having found her, made good cheer with her, though for fifteen years he had not tasted even bread, so great was his abstinence. Finding himself alone with her he said, in a voice broken with sobs and tears: "Mary, my dear child, do you not know me? I am your uncle; I reared and educated you. Alas, in how deplorable a condition I find you! You wear the dress of a courtesan; where then is the angelic habit you once wore in solitude? Where is the chastity you guarded inviolably for so many years? Where are the tears you shed so abundantly? Where the vigils, prayers and contemplations which nourished your spirit. Alas! you have fallen from great heights to an abyss of miseries." The unhappy woman, seized with amazement, had not power to say a single word. Her uncle gazed on her with eyes of compassion and continued: "You speak not, my daughter, dearest part of myself, you say not a word! Your misfortunes have drawn me from my retreat, and I have assumed this disguise only to deliver you. For the rest, be not troubled about your sins, I take them all on myself; I will

account for them to God on the judgment day and in this life I will do penance for you. Quit this place of infamy; return with me to your former abode, where you lived so holily; have pity on my gray hairs, have compassion on him whom you have rendered so wretched." He remained till midnight, weeping, sighing, exhorting and consoling her, telling her that he charged himself with her faults, employing, in fine, all the means his devoted charity could suggest to touch her heart. At last she threw herself at his feet, bathed in tears, and disposed to do all that he should direct. The Saint early next morning put her upon his own beast, and notwithstanding his great age, walked beside her, holding the bridle, and led her to the cell she had quitted, where she passed the rest of her days in the rigors of austere penance. Behold the great zeal of this holy man to save a soul, to bring back a wandering sheep.

But who could describe the zeal of St. Paul?—all that he endured in soul and body, from Jews and Gentiles, from false brethren and from all for the conversion of souls. He joyfully undertook all sorts of labors, he threw himself into the midst of all sorts of perils, he took every possible shape and form to attract them to God. He says to the Ephesians: "I have not ceased for three years to admonish you, shedding abundant tears;" and to the Corinthians: I became the servant of Christ to gain all to Christ. I seek not what is profitable to myself but to many, that they may be saved. Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is scandalized and I am not on fire? He tells the Romans that the incredulity of the Jews so pierced his heart that he desired to become anathema for them. Behold how apostolic men ought to feel towards their neighbor; behold the fires with which they ought to burn. They shall shine as a great light to conduct to God those who are in darkness, says the Sage; they shall run as

sparks among the reeds,[1] to inflame sinners. But let us not stop at the streams, but ascend to the source; let us cast our eyes on the sun without stopping at its rays; let us consider the immense love and the ardent zeal with which Our Lord sought sinners.

SECTION XVI.

CONTINUATION.

I. Love of Jesus Christ for sinners.—II. Vision of Carpus.

I. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, cried Our Saviour, with a profound sigh, that killest prophets and stonest them that are sent to thee, to labor for thy salvation, how often would I have gathered thy children together to unite them to Me, to shield them under the wings of My protection, as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not![2] Our Lord shows by this sorrowful exclamation, His infinite mercy toward the sinners, and the ardent love with which He seeks to attract them to Him by so many different inventions. He shows still more the extreme pain He feels in seeing them deprived by their sins of so many goods, and drawing upon themselves so many misfortunes. He repeats the word Jerusalem twice, says St. Chrysostom, through profound love and compassion, and these sentiments appear in a particular manner by the comparison He uses; for what can be more tender or more anxious than the care a hen takes of her chickens! What will she not do, what will she not undertake for them! She gathers them under her wings, she not only covers them, but presses them to her breast as if she would warm them in her heart; she gives them food, and to urge them to take it she coaxes them, shelters them, feeds them. When she sees anything good she immediately assembles

[1] Sap. xxxvii. [2] Matt. xxiii. 37.

them, deprives herself of her nourishment, and would die of hunger rather than they should want; she combats against all that could injure them, and, despite her weakness and timidity, she courageously defends them against birds of prey; and, improbable though it may seem, she will even cast herself upon thorns, or face armed men, in their defence. Behold an affecting image of Our Lord's love for men, and His desire to save them. During the thirty-three years that He lived among them, He ceased not to seek them in provinces, in cities, in valleys, in private houses; everywhere He exhorted them with burning zeal, ineffable patience and sweetness. He pressed them, solicited them by the most convincing reasons, prayers, promises, threats, and all sorts of means, to quit vice, to embrace virtue, and to think of their salvation. I will not speak here of His labors, His torments, the cruel death He endured for them. This divine Saviour said one day to St. Bridget these words, as the devout Blosius relates: I am the sovereign charity whence will flow forever, as from their true source, all the works which I have done and which I shall do: the love with which I burn for men is as ardent as it was during the time of My passion, and if it were possible that I could suffer as many deaths as there are souls in hell, I would willingly do so, and I would gladly suffer the same torments for each soul in particular as I have suffered for all in general.

II. But I cannot omit here the memorable words of St. Denis and the famous vision of Carpus which he relates. I will use the terms of his excellent translator: Behold then how he writes to the monk Demophilus who had shown too much severity towards a repenting sinner, and who, in the heat of excessive and indiscreet zeal, seemed to desire rather his loss than his salvation; he gives first the example of Moses, David and the holy Angels, so good and so merciful towards sinners; he then says, speaking of Our

Lord: "Let us receive calmly the beneficent rays of the spirit of Jesus, so eminently good, that we may be excited to imitate His infinite goodness." Is it not an act of goodness beyond all words and thoughts to give being to what had none, to desire that His creatures be always near Him, and share His gifts according to their nature? He goes farther. He loves most tenderly even those who fly from Him; He cannot make up His mind to abandon them; He seeks and pursues them as His favorites, and though they despise Him, and put off from day to day their return to Him, He urges them, He conjures them not to contemn His love; those who accuse them before Him are not heard, He Himself undertakes their defence. He wishes to heal them Himself. Though they are far from Him, when he sees in their hearts the desire to return to His love, He goes out to meet them; He embraces them, He presses them to His Heart with amorous tenderness; He reproaches them not with their past conduct, He is content with their present conversion; He rejoices, He invites His friends, that is, the good, to rejoice with Him; He wishes them to acknowledge the newly converted as brothers. If a Demophilus or any other is offended to see His mercy towards sinners, he is reproached for the bitterness of his zeal and taught to be like the true disciples of such a Master, full of mercy and tenderness. Shall we not rejoice, He says, to see that what was lost is found, what was dead is restored to life? In fine, Our Lord carries on His shoulders "the sheep that was lost," places him in the fold, and invites all the good angels to rejoice with Him. He shows the same goodness towards those who are ungrateful and who resist Him; He makes His sun to shine upon the good and the bad, and gives His life even for His enemies. Finally, after various other considerations, St. Denis comes to the vision of Carpus: "I will relate to you a vision which God sent to a certain person. Being in the

island of Candia, a holy man named Carpus gave me hospitality : he was well fitted for the contemplation of divine things because of the great purity of his mind, and he rarely approached the holy Mysteries that he was not favored with some vision during the preparatory acts. This holy person told me that, being one day greatly irritated against a pagan who had snatched from the Church a neophyte while yet in the joys of his baptismal graces, instead of praying for the two in the spirit of meekness and charity, imploring for them the aid of our sweet Saviour, and striving by all possible means to lead them both to God, he, on the contrary, was filled with indignation and bitterness against them, and in this unhappy state of mind, he fell asleep. Towards midnight, at which hour he was accustomed to pray, he rose as usual, though his sleep had been greatly disturbed by the trouble of his mind, but during his prayer he complained to God, saying that certainly it was not reasonable that impious men should remain longer in this life ; and he prayed God with all his heart that He would hurl His thunderbolts at these two men and crush them at a blow. As he made this prayer, his house began to tremble, and a lively flame seemed to descend from heaven towards him ; the heavens then opened, and Jesus appeared surrounded by angels ; which struck Carpus with great astonishment. But in lowering his eyes he saw a vast and horrible gulf filled with confusion and darkness, and on the brink of it the two men he held in such execration, trembling above the abyss, and scarcely able to keep themselves from falling into it. Serpents, twining themselves about the limbs, sought to drag them down, biting them cruelly and even striking them with their tails ; employing, in a word, every possible means to precipitate them ; there were also men who struck these unfortunates, and sought to push them in. Finally, it seemed to Carpus that these men could not avoid falling ; and he took plea-

sure in this horrible spectacle, without caring to look up to Heaven ; he even stretched out his hand to precipitate them, so eager was he for their fall, and not being able to bring this about, he reproached them and overwhelmed them with malediction. Raising his eyes to Heaven he saw Jesus Christ as before, but filled with such compassion for these wretches, that He rose up from His throne and descended to rescue them with outstretched arms, while angels did all in their power to hinder their damnation. Jesus Christ then addressed Himself to Carpus, saying : Strike Me, for I am ready to suffer death once more for the salvation of men ; I should even suffer it with joy, could I die and men remain guiltless of My death : for the rest, choose whether you will live in hell with the serpents and lost souls who strive to lure these men to perdition, or dwell with God and the good angels and Saints who love human beings with the greatest tenderness. All this Carpus related to men, and I believe it to be very true." Such is the account given by St. Denis.

SECTION XVII.

CONCLUSION.

I. We must consider the soul, not the body.—II. Beauty of the soul.

Imitating the example of Our Lord, apostolic men ought to love men ardently and tenderly, to burn with a desire of their salvation and procure it by all possible means ; they ought to kindle in their hearts the fire of perfect charity which has all the dimensions which St. Paul gives to the charity of God ; in its breadth, it embraces all men of every nation and condition ; in its length, it is not limited to a day, a month, but animates the whole life without ever relaxing, without growing cold in practice, whatever difficulties it encounters ; in its height, by proposing as an

end the pure glory of God and the salvation of souls ; in its depth, fearing not to descend to the vilest and basest things, as to visit the sick, to succor the poor, to enter the cells of prisoners, to console the abandoned and instruct the ignorant.

I. But we have an important admonition to give on this matter ; it is that the apostolic man ought to take care not to consider the persons for whose salvation he labors, as regards the exterior, but only as regards the soul and what is hidden within ; otherwise, he should not only be in danger of losing himself, but he would produce only little fruits, and these accompanied by great defects ; he would make an unjust exception of persons, receiving the rich and rejecting the poor, loving to conduct those whom nobility, beauty, amiability, render of some account before the world, while he considers it a heavy burden to conduct less favored mortals, and wearied and disgusted with such an employment, shirks it as soon as he can. He who would worthily labor for the salvation of souls in the spirit of Jesus, ought to be very careful of this important point, that he may avoid the dangerous snares while so many are shipwrecked. The physician ought to consider the body since it is his business to heal it, but those who are destined to heal the soul ought to rivet their attention on it, and with the more reason, as the body and all exterior things depend on the soul, and it is the soul that ennobles man and raises him above all other created objects. None of those whom riches and honors elevate above others is therefore great, says Seneca ; why does he seem great to you ?—because you measure him with his pedestal. Do you not see that a gnat is always little though it be placed on the summit of a mountain, and that a giant is a giant in the bottom of a pit ? What deceives us is that we judge of a man not by what he is, but by what he possesses ; we put in the balance with him his goods, his honors, his offices, per-

haps even something worse ; we judge him only by his accessories. St. Gregory remarks that Our Lord being invited by a man of great quality to come and heal his sick son, would not go, but healed him from the place where He was, and that He wished to go in person to heal the Centurion's servant, though the Centurion only asked him to say but the word, and not to take the trouble of entering his house. What is the reason of this? "It is," answers the holy Doctor, "to humble our pride which makes us esteem men, not because of their nature and because they are images of God, but because of their honors and riches. Our Divine Redeemer, to show us that what men esteem ought to be regarded as vile, and that what they despise is not really despicable, would not visit the son of a great lord, though he was willing to accord this favor to a poor servant. It is thus Our Lord would confound our pride, which grounds the merit of men not on their nature but on the accessories which surround them, and which knows not how to appreciate the honorable and noble gifts of God in them. Socrates says, in Plato, to the beautiful Alcibiades : If any one loves the body of Alcibiades, he does not properly love Alcibiades, but only something belonging to him. He who truly loves you, dear Alcibiades, loves your soul."

II. Hence, often when Our Lord wills to make use of some one to produce great fruits among men and to enkindle in their heart an ardent zeal for their salvation, he makes them see the excellence and beauty of the human soul. He showed St. Catherine of Sienna the beauty of a soul in the state of grace, because He designed to employ her in withdrawing many sinners from their vices, and producing great fruit in His Church : a beauty so great and so ravishing, says this Saint, that all the eloquence of the greatest orators could not give the least idea of it. Placing before her this beautiful spectacle, Our Lord said :

Who would not willingly labor and expose himself to all possible dangers to save a creature so beautiful and admirable? If, being what I am, I have been so violently captivated by love of souls, that I hesitated not to become man and give My life for their ransom, ought not you, with greater reason, use every possible means to hinder the loss of creatures so perfect? The Saint then prayed Our Lord to do her the favor of enabling her to see souls, that, touched by their beauty and attractions, she might solicit their salvation with more affection and courage. Our Lord heard her prayer. Ever after, she saw clearly the souls of those who visited her: by this sight she was powerfully animated to excite them to virtue, nor would she tolerate any stain on the ravishing beauty with which the Creator adorned them; by this means, without distracting herself with externals, she passed immediately to the beauty of the soul. In these sentiments she said to her confessor: O, my Father, had you seen the beauty of a soul, I doubt not that to gain to God this masterpiece of His hand, you would freely give a thousand lives if you possessed them! St. Ignatius, our glorious founder, was favored with a similar grace; God showed him the beauty of a soul redeemed with the Blood of His Son, and this sight inflamed him with such a burning zeal for the salvation of souls, that he employed the rest of his life in this function, and instituted an Order of men whose principal office it is to labor for the conversion of souls, after the example and according to the Spirit of Jesus Christ whose Name they bear, and to refer to this end all their exercises, all the labors of their body and all the powers of their mind. St. Mary Magdalen di Pazzi burned with so violent a desire for the salvation of her neighbor, that it could not be described nor hardly imagined; and this desire was enkindled in her heart by the view Our Lord gave her of a soul in the state of grace: she was so ravished with its splen-

dor and beauty, that she felt within her, as it were, a violent passion to draw souls to God. She said in the ardor of these desires: O God! if it were possible for me to go to the Indies, or among the Turks, to announce Thy holy law to children and the unlettered, thus converting souls, all pains and sorrows of mind and body would appear sweet to me. And as her sex and condition prevented the execution of this desire, she macerated her body by rude penances, and offered continual prayers for the intention.

In conclusion, I say that the apostolic man ought to be very careful in his communications with his neighbor to habituate his mind to open his eyes to interior things, to consider the soul, this high and excellent creature, crowned with splendor and glory, the image of God, the sister of the angels, the conquest of Jesus Christ, and the purchase of His Blood; and to forget the body, this mass of corruption, this wall of clay, this spoil of death and aliment of worms, and not even stop to think whether the man for whose salvation he labors has a body or not.

SECTION XVIII.

ANOTHER VIRTUE NECESSARY FOR AN APOSTOLIC MAN.

PRUDENCE WHICH REGULATES ZEAL.

I. Prudence is necessary.—II. He must not forget himself.—III. His zeal will be the more efficacious for this.—IV. He must labor only at what belongs to his office.—V. He must follow the directions of Superiors.—VI. Security which prudence gives.

I. Though the apostolic man ought to have, as we have said, an ardent zeal for the salvation of souls, yet to make this perfect and agreeable to God it must be regulated by prudence and circumspection. *Prudence is the science of the Saints*[1] says the Sage; it is the torch which guides them

[1] Prov. ix. 10.

in the regulation of their lives and the practice of virtues. If this torch be extinguished, they become as blind men, and stumble at every step, no matter how good their will is ; but if it burn before them, it cannot fail to guide them securely ; it goes before all good actions, says St. Basil, which without it would cease to be good and even become bad. Now, if prudence is so necessary to direct all virtues, it is still more necessary to direct zeal, which is full of heat and impetuosity, and to which it ought to give the stamp of wisdom, particularly in three principal points.

II. The first is that the apostolic man apply to the salvation of his neighbor so as not to neglect his own, but always to take more care of his own soul than of any one else's : let him snatch souls from hell, but let him not change places with them ; let him conduct them to paradise in such a manner that he himself may be always nearest to it. Surely it is not the conduct of a wise man to save others and lose himself, to advance the business of others and ruin his own ; to drown himself, saving them from shipwreck, to cast himself into the flames that they may not burn. A man who would act thus, has lost his reason. What will it profit a man to gain the whole world, said Our Lord, *if he lose his own soul?* There is nothing worth so immense a price. St. Francis Xavier, writing to Father Gaspard Barzé, who was inflamed with extraordinary zeal for the salvation of souls, says : "Your first care ought to be for your own soul, nothing being more true than this word of the Sage : *Who is bad to himself, to whom will he be good?* Labor for your own spiritual advancement, and then for that of your brothers and domestics, before thinking of others, because this is not only the order of nature but that of grace, the first article in the account God will ask of you, who has given you no more precious deposit than yourself. And those who fail in this, forgetting themselves to take care even of the spiritual affairs of

their neighbor, are cousins-german to those who damn themselves to please men." God wills that we have charity for our neighbors, but not a charity which would ruin our souls to do them service. The things which proceed from God are always in proper order and never deviate from a right line. Now the order He has established is, that we have more affection for our own soul than for that of any other; even though we could save the whole human race by damning ourselves we should not do so, not merely for our own interest, but even for that of God, whose glory consists not solely in the salvation and perfection of His creatures, but in the execution of His will. It is useless to object here the wish which St. Paul made to become another man for the Jews, his brethren, who would not quit the law of Moses to embrace the Gospel, because he spoke thus by exaggeration as the Doctors explain, and rather to show the ardent desire he had of their conversion, than by a real wish to be deprived forever of the vision of Jesus Christ whom he loved so tenderly, and to purchase their salvation by his damnation, of which he had not the slightest idea. And though he did truly wish it, he did not include, as all agree, that which is most bitter in such an unhappy state, I mean sin. The apostolic man strongly convinced of this truth, will labor for his neighbor's salvation, so as not to neglect his own, over which, on the contrary, he will watch very carefully. Hence he will not fail in his prayers, mortifications and other exercises of piety, which are necessary for his own perfection.

III. This will contribute greatly to his success, it will render his zeal more powerful, his words more touching, his actions more energetic, and his efforts to be serviceable to his neighbor more useful to all parties: for it is very true that example makes more impression on us than words, that these only strike the ear while example affects the heart. Whoever wishes to operate great fruits among

men ought to lead an exemplary life before them ; and if he desire to teach virtue in the most effective manner, let him practice it perfectly himself, otherwise his best efforts will prove ineffectual ; he will only beat the air, he will pull down with one hand what he builds up with the other. Experience daily teaches us the effects which reputation for sanctity produces, how unlimited is the power which he who has justly acquired it exercises over hearts and minds. With what power he directs wills ; what confidence in his words ! what obedience to his counsels ! how people tremble at his menaces ! how sweetly his consolations open hearts and dissipate all their sorrows ! Such a man with mediocre talents can do more good than a great many others who have more natural ability : Twelve Apostles converted the universe ; one sun is more useful and does more good than all the stars together, because it possesses more light and heat : so one holy and perfect man will procure more glory to God and be more useful to the salvation of souls than five hundred others. The disciples who went to Emmaus said of Our Lord, that *He was powerful in works and words before God and before all the people.* Behold consequences as remarkable as they are infallible ! He was mighty in His works and afterwards energetic in words—He had great power before God, and He had great power before all the people. It is then certain that the force of words flows from that of actions, and that the authority one acquires before men comes from that which a good life makes him merit before God. Now, two sorts of works can render a man powerful : miracles and heroic acts of virtue. All these works communicate great power to him who exercises them ; but miracles have ceased, or at least are not so common as formerly, because as the faith is universally preached and profoundly rooted in the world, they are no longer necessary ; the apostolic man must then become powerful by his virtues and clothe himself with

their might. Virtues are better than the gifts of miracles, because they spring from a nobler principle, that is, the habit of charity, and are certain marks of the dwelling of God in the heart, and, besides, they are more profitable for salvation. The apostolic man must therefore strive faithfully and constantly to practice them, certain that by this means he will labor more perfectly and efficaciously than by any other for the salvation of his neighbor and the advancement of souls in perfection.

II. The second point of the prudence of an apostolic man is to apply himself to what is proper for him. All who labor for the salvation of souls are not equally capable of the same functions ; some have great talent for preaching, others for the confessional, others for catechising ; some teach the sciences very well ; some are made to treat with learned men, others with the simple and ignorant ; some have the gift of conversing and render their visits, actively and passively, very profitable ; others know how to console the sick very well, and to help them to die well ; this man is proper to sketch and begin salvation in souls, that other to finish, to give souls the last trait of perfection. *There is diversity in graces*,[1] says St. Paul. We must cultivate and perfect that which is communicated to us, for thus we shall be more useful to our neighbor because we shall serve him better, and more pleasing to God because in this we follow His will, of which the grace He gives us is an infallible sign ; and all will be sweeter and easier for ourselves, because naturally we do cheerfully and with little pain whatever we have talent and attrait for. St. Gregory Nazianzen, writing to Eudoxius, relates that, there was a law at Athens which obliged all young people arrived at a certain age to go to a public place where all the implements of every art were exposed in order that seeing and handling them, they might each choose the art

[1] Cor. xii. 4.

for which they had most inclination. This was a very wise law, said the holy Doctor, because things for which one has a natural taste commonly succeed, while those to which one applies by force are rarely successful, for then one has to combat nature. We must act in the same manner as regards what we do for the salvation of our neighbor, and choose the functions which we, or those more clear-sighted than we, judge most suitable for us, and best calculated to benefit our neighbor. But, alas! the misery of man being so great, it often happens that it is to what is fitted for him he least desires to apply, because other functions appear more honorable before the world ; and hence instead of combatting this human consideration, he seems to regard it as good ; he neglects what is most proper for him, or abandons it altogether, to apply to things for which he is unfit, thus contradicting the designs of God, doing violence to grace and depriving his neighbor of the great good he should procure him by keeping to the ministry to which God had called him and for which He fitted him. What happens to him who thus quits his own sphere? In acting against his nature and the divine vocation, he does not succeed, because he can succeed only with the grace which is necessary for him, and which he has not ; in other functions he could procure excellently well the glory of God and the salvation of souls, but in those which he has chosen he can do but little ; and people the most simple have sense enough to perceive and to say that he is not following his proper calling.

III. The third point on which the apostolic man ought to show his prudence and regulate his zeal is that, if a Religious, he must render his zeal conformable to the Institute he has embraced, and dependent on the will of his superiors ; so that if he cannot assist his neighbor, exercise the ministry of preaching, charge himself with the direction of some soul in particular, etc., without encroaching on the

foundation, he ought to turn his designs towards other objects, because the preservation of his rules ought to be incomparably dearer to him than the direction of a soul, and he ought to be more anxious to become a good religious by his perfect submission to his superiors than to render others good. Besides, this will be more profitable even for the neighbor, for while the rules of his Order are maintained in their vigor, which depends on their exact observance, the Order will do great good to an incredible number of souls, which would not be done if it became remiss, and if by relaxing, it should fall into ruin, as commonly happens. And in his own case, if he is virtuous, and a faithful observer of his rules, he will be more capable of aiding his neighbor because of the wonderful power which his sanctity will give him, as we have said, than if he transgressed them. He must, whatever he undertakes, always consider that all power, all the supernatural capacity, all the grace that he has or can have, is given him as a member of his Order and as a grace of his Institute, and that to obtain it he ought to be inseparably attached to his rules, not only in the body, but still more in mind and heart; as a branch to the trunk, and in all things to depend on his superiors, who in appointing him to one function and not to another, are as canals by which this grace flows on him. Father Lefevre of our Society wrought great fruits in Portugal, at Court and everywhere, to the great satisfaction of the King and every one else. St. Ignatius commanded him to go to Castile; the true servant of God immediately obeyed, not being so much attached to place or office, but that he could easily go elsewhere, and undertake other duties when obedience so ordained; wishing in all things to follow the will of his Superior, though in this case it commanded him to leave the certain for the doubtful. Father Gaspard Barzé, an indefatigable laborer in the vineyard of Our

Lord, made a vow never to refuse any succor for soul or body to those who sought his assistance, if it was in his power to accord what thay required. St. Francis Xavier ordered him not to quit Goa, but to exercise there all his zeal, and limit his labors to this one post ; whereupon this truly apostolic man wrote to St. Ignatius : "The greatest desire I had in this world was to sacrifice my life in Japan, and consume myself entirely for the conversion of its poor infidel people ; but I submit to the will of those who govern me, for I have always thought that the most agreeable sacrifice we can make to God is that of obedience and submission to His will." And St. Francis Xavier himself, with what dependance did he not exercise his zeal in the prodigious conquest of souls he made in the east? St. Ignatius, foreseeing his own death, desired to recall Xavier to Rome to sustain the Society as one of its strongest pillars, and wrote to him a letter which he signed *I*, which in Latin signifies *go, come*, thus showing that he had so high an opinion of the obedience of this Saint that by a single letter, and that the least in the alphabet, he could withdraw him from India, where he operated so many miracles, converted whole nations, baptized a million of souls, where he appeared as a sun shining in the midst of the blind people, by leading the life and doing the works of an apostle, and make him come from one end of the world to the other. Such ought to be the depositions of the apostolic man : he ought not to choose or bind himself to the labors of the ministry by his own will, but by the will of God and that of his superiors ; he ought to act conformably to his Institute and the spirit of his order, keeping his rules faithfully and preserving domestic peace : he must take the greatest care to live with good understanding and in perfect union with all in his house ; being well persuaded that to exercise charity without, he must not wound it within, and if it cannot be exercised in both places, to ex-

ercise it in the latter in preference to the former. Prudence ought to teach him that in order to succor externs, he must not unjustly offend those who are united to him by the same profession, with whom he is obliged to live day and night, of whom he has continual need, and in whose hands he will be till death.

IV. With these three precautions, let the apostolic man give himself with ardor to the salvation of his neighbor, doing all in his power to promote it, without fear of receiving any damage or loss ; let him be certain that in acting thus, in following these rules, he will preserve peace in the midst of war, recollection of mind in public places, devotion in business ; that he will live innocently with sinners, and come forth from temptation purer than the rays of the sun. Two Sicilian brothers, surnamed the Pious, having taken on their shoulders the one his father and the other his mother, to save them from the flames of Mount Gibel which were more furious than usual, fled from the volcano. Being attacked by the flames because the weight of their burdens did not permit them to run fast enough, they received no injury; but the flame, respecting their filial piety, divided before it approached them, and reunited only after it had passed them : in like manner the apostolic man, saving his neighbor, will not burn in the midst of fires, and the flames which consume so many others will serve only to enkindle still more the fires of his charity. *Fear nothing*, God says to him by his Prophet, when for My service and the salvation of souls, thou shalt walk in the midst of waters ; I will be with thee and the floods shall not drown thee ; walk bravely, thou shalt not burn, the flame will be harmles for thee ;[1] since thou takest My will for thy guide, My glory for thy end, My power for thy shield.

[1] Isaiah, xliii. 1.

SECTION XIX.

ANOTHER VIRTUE NECESSARY FOR THE APOSTOLIC MAN.

THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER.

I. Prayer unites man to God.—II. Prayer teaches how to conduct souls.—III. It is a means of procuring the salvation of the neighbor.

It is a truth which cannot be doubted, that prayer is extremely necessary for all who labor to save souls ; and if it be certain that the practice of prayer is the most important of all exercises to operate our salvation, we ought to think that it is not less necessary to operate the salvation of others.

I. Prayer unites man to God, and by this union renders him capable of great things. An instrument to be useful and proper for its works, ought to be united to the hand of the workman ; if separated from this, or joined to it only by a thread, its action would be very imperfect. It is the communication we have with God by prayer that unites us to Him ; by it we become instruments in His hands which He uses for the execution of His designs : without this union we are useless to Him. All the force and power which the Sacred Humanity of Our Lord had to operate the salvation of the human race, came from its intimate union with the Divinity ; without this it had been weak and powerless, for it is *the spirit*, the Divinity that *vivifies*, and gives the power to vivify ; *the flesh* by itself, would *profit nothing*. The apostolic man ought to ground his hopes, in what regards the salvation of his neighbor, on the union he has with God, and expects chiefly from Him the grace to produce fruits of sanctity.[1] We read in the Life of St. Teresa, a circumstance which gives us great

[1] *He who abides in Me and I in him*—and not any others—*the same beareth much fruit.*—John xv. 5.

instructions on this point : Our Lord often sent messages to persons concerning their salvation, by this Saint ; she gently complained of this to Him, and humbly said that He could more easily, if such were His good pleasure, make known His will by Himself than by her, and need not therefore employ her in things which gave her such pain. Our Lord replied : I do it first for thee, because thou canst apply to nothing greater, and thou aidest by this means those who serve Me : I do it for them, because they are not in a state in which I would immediately communicate with them ; and if I should do so they would not believe Me, because they give themselves not to prayer. The same Saint said another time to Our Lord on a similar occasion : My Lord, are there not other persons, especially men and doctors, who would do this better than I who am a woman, if Thou woulst charge them with it? Our Lord responded in these remarkable words : Because men and doctors will not communicate with Me, I come as a poor man driven away by them, to seek women to solace Me, and to treat with Me of my affairs. He had already said nearly the same thing to St. Catherine of Sienna, who excused herself from conversing with the world, because of her sex and ignorance, and desired that Our Lord would employ learned men. He answered that the pride of the erudite had now come to such a point that He did not wish to use them, but would confound them by women, whom He would replenish with His spirit and His wisdom. There fore, communication with God renders a man, a simple maid even, proper to promote the salvation of souls, and the defect of this communication renders even theologians useless for this purpose.

II. Secondly, prayer teaches how souls are to be guided ; by it the apostolic man asks of God this great science, and receives it ; by it he receives light to enlighten men, flames to warm them, strong and efficacious words to touch them ;

it is there he acquires the gift of discernment of spirits, to penetrate the depths of consciences and enlighten them, to distinguish the good ways from the bad, and to discover the ruses of the demon when, to deceive souls, he transforms himself into an angel of light. It often happens that persons attracted to God by an extraordinary way, and led by unusual paths, feel great uneasiness, and with reason doubt as to whether the way by which they walk is secure ; whether the routes they take, in place of tending to salvation and perfection, may not terminate in precipieces and ruin them : they then come as they ought, to consult a man who has the charge of guiding souls ; they discover to him these sentiments, they expose to him as well as they can, the operations of the Holy Spirit in them ; if he is not a man of prayer, he will understand nothing of these mysteries, it will be an unknown language to him ; instead of enlightening them he will embroil them ; in attempting to instruct them to follow the attraction of the Holy Spirit that they may receive more abundantly His graces, he will only puzzle them ; he will give them advice which will close the avenues to these precious favors, and which to their great prejudice may cause Him to withdraw His graces. When St. Teresa communicated her sublime thoughts on the presence of God, when she spoke of her prayer of silence and repose, of sleep and union, of her powers, of her suspensions, ravishments, raptures, of the assaults, and all the other wonders that passed in her soul, actively or passively, few persons among those whom she consulted, could understand her : not more than three or four. Why was this ? Whence came such a dearth ? Was it from scarcity of learned men, of priests, religious and secular, who made profession of laboring for the salvation of souls? No, there were quite enough of these people, but there were only few who ardently practiced prayer, and who were versed in the secrets of the interior life.

And though learned men, as the same Saint said, have this advantage over others, that they can give security to the mind on points of faith, and hinder them from being deceived, if indeed they join conscience to science ; yet if they unite not mystic theology to scholastic, they will not be capable of aiding these sublime souls, and hence they will deprive God of a very great glory and the Church of a great prop. The science of spiritual things is a science of experience ; what we gain only in books we speak coldly and imperfectly ; as the words come only from a dead source, they cannot produce any fruit of life : they must come from the heart which, enlightened and inflamed in prayer by the Holy Spirit, suggests them to the mouth. And though in giving one's self to prayer, one receives not the same graces and experiences not the same effects as these sublime souls, one ceases not to become proper to serve them, by this exercise ; because in it are acquired the principles and the seeds, and it gives a sketch if not a full portrait of their sentiments, and their lights, if not in all the eclat of their splendor, at least in their aurora. Besides, in any case God will not fail to give to a man so disposed all that is necessary to acquit himself of his duty and assist the soul that addresses him.

III. Thirdly, prayer is a means very powerful to procure the salvation of the neighbor, and very often a quarter of an hour of prayer will obtain for a sinner more grace and strength to quit his evil ways, bewail his sins and become perfectly converted, than a long discourse you should make him. The reason of this is clear, God alone can communicate these graces to this man, and operate these effects ; consequently to obtain them for him we must treat with God. He then who wishes to save many souls ought not to make such account of preaching, conversation and other means, as of prayer ; because in prayer he treats immediately with Him on whom the issue depends, and who

alone can give to these different ministrations all the power they will have to touch hearts. The two greatest lights that ever enlightened the world, the two greatest Doctors with whom Our Lord fortified His Church, were converted not by preaching but by prayer. St. Paul owed his miraculous change and his salvation to the prayer of St. Stephen; and St. Austin is indebted for his to that of St. Monica, his mother. Prayer ought to be the father which engenders souls, and the mother which conceives them and brings them forth. Philo remarks that before Abraham merited this name, which signifies father of many nations, he bore that of Abram, which signifies sublime and contemplative father, to teach us that to become father of the faithful and engender souls to God, we must give ourselves to the contemplation of divine things, and to frequent prayer.

Hence Our Lord during the three years which he especially employed in the salvation of his neighbor, passed the days in preaching, visiting men and conversing with them, and the nights in prayer. He traced the model for those who were to be His co-laborers in His divine exercises. The Lord hath commanded mercy during the day, and the night He destined to prayer and His praises.[1] St. Luke relates that the Apostles being distracted from their functions by the care of providing for the wants of widows, and dividing with the poor the wealth of the rich, resolved in an assembly they convoked on this subject, to establish men to attend to this business. As for us, said they, we will give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.[2] They unite prayer and preaching as things which should go together, and never be separated. Their example has been followed by all the Saints who have ever embraced the apostolic life; they applied themselves earnestly to prayer, and by this exercise alone they have done more

[1] Ps. xli. 9. [2] Acts vi. 4.

for them by preaching and all others. They subdued by its force rebellious minds which had resisted all other means; they healed with this balm wounds for which all other remedies had proved ineffectual.

For this reason it is that our father, St. Ignatius, recommends so earnestly the study of prayer to those among us who apply in a particular manner to the salvation of souls, such as the professed, and the formed co-adjutors, and he thinks it well that they should spend in prayer whatever time remains after they have fulfilled the duties of obedience and charity. The Spouse in the Canticles wishes that His Beloved should sleep, He forbids his companions to awake her till she has taken the necessary repose, to show that those who wish to labor profitably for the salvation of souls, and, like legitimate and fruitful spouses, give children to God, ought first to apply to prayer and contemplation, otherwise their action will be weak and languishing, like that of a man who, not having slept, who is tired and weary. In this thought the Royal Prophet said: It is in vain for you to rise before the light, you who eat the bread of sorrow, and who labor much in the vineyard of Our Lord; *do not rise until you have rested*, until in the exercise of prayer you shall have repaired your strength and acquired new ardor, in order that you may not succomb to the fatigue, or sink under your burden.

SECTION XX.

OTHER VIRTUES NECESSARY TO THE APOSTOLIC MAN.

MORTIFICATION AND PATIENCE.

I. Mortification.—II. Patience.

I. Mortification, the Sister and inseparable companion of prayer, is also a virtue necessary to those who embrace the apostolic life, and so necessary that there is no kind

of life in which its practice ought to be more continual and more perfect. Apostolic men ought to persuade themselves that it is absolutely indispensable that they conquer the movements of corrupt nature, render themselves absolute masters of their passions, control their humors, in fine, that they be solidly mortified, otherwise all their cares and labors will be vain and unfruitful. Men owe their salvation to the Cross, to the mortification and death of Our Saviour ; the sufferings and the sorrows of His Passion have more power to close the doors of hell and open those of heaven, to lead souls to their duties and convert them to God, than all the words and miracles of His life. Thus Isaiah[1] said of Him : *If he will give His Blood to efface sin*, to destroy the tyranny of the demon, and to deliver the human race, *He will see* His death produce admirable fruits ; and a *long and numerous posterity* will acknowledge Him for their Father. To His Apostles whom he trained after His own example to this elevated ministry, He said : Amen, amen, I say to you, if the grain of wheat cast into the earth die not, *it remaineth alone*, and produceth nothing ; *but if it die it beareth much fruit*.[2] Every one knows that He speaks here of the means to which God His Father had attached the redemption of man, that is, His passion and Death. Hence He said by the mouth of the Royal Prophet : *I am alone until I pass*.[3] He meant to say, I am alone, no person can follow Me. I alone am Son of God and heir of heaven, till I pass the torrent of Cedron and am charged with injuries, torn with stripes, crowned with thorns, fastened to a gibbet dead on a Cross ; I shall be alone till then ; but after, "I shall multiply, I shall advance bravely, many will become My imitators, many will endure death for Me, My Father will have a great number of adoptive children, and I shall have many brothers and co-heirs," says St. Austin.[4] The same Father, referring to the com-

[1] Isaiah liii. 10. [2] John xii. 24. [3] Ps. 140 10. [4] In illum Ps.

parison of the grain of wheat, says in another place : I give thanks to this mysterious Wheat Who has willed to die, and Who by His death, has so abundantly multiplied ; I give thanks to the only Son of God, Christ Jesus Our Lord, because He has not disdained to suffer our death to make us worthy of His life.

We must remark on this subject, that Our Lord could bear the sacred Name of Jesus, that is, Saviour of men, only after losing part of His Blood in the circumcision, and that He became Saviour in effect when He shed the last drop of it, and suffered the most painful death ; so true is it that to save men, sufferings were necessary. The reasons of this are clear : because without mortification which includes several virtues, man will not do a great many things which are necessary for the saving of souls, and will do many things contrary to this end : he will not take the trouble necessary to go and come, to watch, to suffer heat and cold ; he might say, he had not strength, though this would not always be true ; he would make a difficulty of retrenching his little recreations and inconveniencing herself : if he is fond of eating and drinking, how should he bring himself to fast ? If he takes his repasts in the world, he will naturally seek what gratifies his appetite ; if he is proud, how can he humble himself ? if he will not subdue his anger it will appear in a thousand occasions which happen at almost every step in the holy ministry ; and as the passions obscure the understanding, confuse the ideas and seduce the will, it would be impossible for him not to say and do many things injurious to the cause he pretends to aid.

Mortification then must put all in order, it must take away the fear of losing his ease, a fear which hinders so many persons from supporting courageously the labors of the sacred ministry. Our Lord, designing to choose His Apostles and form a society capable of converting the

world, did not select delicate men, but fishers, people who are generally hard-working and inured to labor. St. Paul, wishing to instruct by his own example those whose vocation it is to lead the apostolic life, says : For the salvation of souls, I have been in prisons frequently, in stripes above measure, in deaths often. In labor and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness! He says elsewhere on the same subject : I die daily, I protest by your glory, brethren, which I have in Christ Jesus Our Lord; I put myself in daily danger of death that I may merit before my God the glory of having attached you to His service. Who could recount the labor of St. Ignatius in Europe, or of St. Francis Xavier in the Indies, for the salvation and perfection of souls? Who could describe the pains of mind and body in which for the same end, all those who, wearing the same habit, have so worthily followed them, and in general all truly apostolic men of whatever nation or condition? Thus the Spouse who notwithstanding the delicacy of her complexion fitly represents them, says : *I rose up to open to my Beloved ;* that is, as the Saints interpret it, to open by preachings, confessions, visits and other exercises of charity, the hearts of sinners to grace, and to give my Beloved entrance ; and she immediately adds : My hands distill myrrh, and my fingers are full of the choicest myrrh ; to show that it is with the key of mortification that the heart is opened, and that all our actions, even the smallest, ought to be steeped in this liquor, bitter but salutary, to produce these happy effects. And certainly the conquest of a soul is too great a gain, too rich a spoil, to cost nothing to him who wins it.

II. As patience has nearly the same lineaments with mortification, what we have said of the latter will receive a new lustre from what we are about to say of the former, which the apostolic man may place in the category of the virtues he has need of. And indeed the ministry of the

salvation of souls is accompanied with so many pains and difficulties, that if the apostolic man be not armed with patience on all sides he can never do anything good. To succeed in these functions he must necessarily support with patience and sweetness the defects of his neighbor, he must study his disposition and treat him accordingly, he must bear rebukes, contempt and injuries, he must swallow in silence a thousand bitternesses, otherwise he would seize nothing, the prey would escape him. St. Paul, the model of these divine men, depicts excellently in his own person the character of patience, which ought to distinguish the apostolic man. *Till this hour* we are in the constant exercise of patience ; *we suffer hunger and thirst, nakedness* and ill-treatment ; we are overwhelmed with blows, and have *no fixed abode* ;[1] *we labor, working with our own hands,* to obtain our poor nourishment ; *we are reviled and we bless,* wishing all sorts of goods to those who desire our death ; *we are persecuted, and we suffer it* without murmur ; *we are blasphemed, and we entreat* with all possible meekness ; in fine, it is not possible to imagine anything more despicable than we ; to see how we are treated you would say that we are *the refuse of the world, the offscouring of all even till now* ;[2] or as public victims to be immolated for the sins of the people. Behold the pattern of apostolic men, behold the way by which they should be ready to pass. Thus the Royal Prophet says : *they must be patient if they desire to preach,*[3] and to labor usefully in the salvation of their neighbor. And St. Paul says, in fervent terms : *Let us show ourselves worthy ministers of God,* called to labor for souls, *in much patience, in tribulation, in necessities, in distresses, in chastity, in knowledge, in long suffering, in sweetness, in the Holy Ghost, in charity unfeigned.* St. Paul speaks of patience and knowledge, but he gives the first rank to patience, as the most necessary. Elsewhere he says : "The marks of my

[1] Cor. iv. ii. [2] Cor. vi. 4. [3] Ps. iii. 16.

apostolate among you have been *patience and miracles*;[1]" the patience is of more account than the miracles and he gives it the first place. Every one knows that the glory of the first conversion wrought in Japan is due to an act of patience. St. Francis Xavier could not open the eyes of its blind inhabitants by the warmth of his zeal, the sweetness of his invitations, the force of his reasons, the fervor of his prayers; finally, one day when John Fernandez his companion was preaching at a cross-road near the city of Amanguez, an insolent man spat in his face; the preacher did not show the least resentment at this injury, but quietly wiped his face and continued his discourse as if nothing had happened. One of his auditors was so touched with this heroic patience, that he believed that men endowed with such great virtue, and to whom God gave power to perform such elevated actions, could not announce a false religion; and convinced by this proof more than by all others, he went to St. Francis after the sermon, was instructed more particularly and afterwards baptised. In like manner Pomerania owes its conversion to the patience of St. Otho, Bishop of Bamberg, rather than to his preaching.

But nothing is more admirable than what St. Ephrem relates of the celebrated hermit, St. Abraham, of whom we have already spoken. This holy personage after having lived long in solitude and in great austerity and sanctity, received an order from the Bishop of the place, to quit his cell and go to a neighboring town full of wicked pagans, to show them their errors and the enormity of their crimes, and to lead them to innocence and Christianity. The humility of the Saint led him at first to excuse himself; but complying with obedience, he set out, and began to labor with incredible earnestness among these rude people. He sweetly showed them the unhappiness of their state, admo-

[1] Cor. xii. 12.

nished them of their sins, prayed and conjured them, and employed all imaginable means to lead them to truth; but instead of listening and submitting to him, they mocked, menaced him, and from threats came to effects; they threw stones at him, tied a cord to his feet and dragged him outside the town, after having buffeted him in the most cruel manner, till they left him for dead on the ground. The Saint, oblivious of his wounds, went to the church which he had caused to be built with his patrimony, had recourse to prayer and wept all night before Our Lord for these cruel obstinate souls. He suffered and prayed for the space of three years, says St. Ephrem, without ever being angry with these people or showing them the least resentment, without even evincing a movement of impatience; on the contrary, all these persecutions only increased his charity; they were as violent winds which made the fire of his love burn more brightly, and eject larger flames. When they had beaten him, dragged him in the mud, overwhelmed him with stones and outrages, he caressed them, embraced them, tried to soften them by sweet words, and to gain their hearts. He besought the old men as his fathers, the mature as his brothers, the young as his sons, displaying towards all the bowels of perfect charity. He continued to act thus till these rough minds and strong hearts, astonished by such virtue, became softened and bruised. They said among themselves that the faith preached by a man in whom shone such exemplary patience, whom no persecution could move, whose charity no injury could cool, must indeed be true; since notwithstanding the outrages with which they overwhelmed him, he had not abandoned them, nor even said one angry word; he had borne all joyfully, and certainly the God he adored must be the true God. They then began to open their eyes, to acknowledge their errors, and to believe what he announced to them. The good hermit, overjoyed be-

yond expression at all this, instructed and baptised them, and henceforth they lived as good Christians. When they were solidly grounded in their Religion, the Saint withdrew in the night to his dear solitude. Behold the great victory patience achieved in this apostolic man ; so, the Bishop in sending him to those wicked people said that he would convert them more by his patience and charity, than by any other way.

Moreover, does it not require great patience to abandon the repose of silence and the delights of contemplation to undertake the labor of action, and the embarrassment of many wearisome affairs, and to live among rude, coarse men! Does not one suffer much in leaving the communication of God and the blessed spirits, in which the soul is shielded from all dangers, enlightened and perfected daily more and more, to converse with men with great peril! for it is difficult to live with them without contracting some stains. How great was the patience evinced by St. Martin, when being on the point of receiving the recompense of his labors, and entering into the joy of the Lord, he spoke these memorable words : Lord, if I am still necessary to your people, I refuse not to labor ; though arrived at the port of salvation through Thy mercy, I refuse not to cast myself into the high sea, to become a prey to new tempests, for Thy service. When the noble Saint, Dunstan of Canterbury, was invited by the cherubim and seraphim to celebrate with them in heaven the feast of the Ascension, after thanking them a thousand times for such a favor, he prayed them to excuse him, because he could not leave his people on so beautiful a feast, without teaching them how they ought to imitate Our Lord ascending into heaven. What heroic patience to defer the enjoyment of so great a good! The delay was not long, however, for the angels having received his excuse, which they found very just, told him to be ready on the following Saturday, on which day

the Saint really died : yet these few days seemed very long to a heart inflamed with divine love, devoured with a desire to see God, and so well able to comprehend the immense greatness of the good of which he deprived himself. How violent the love St. Paul bore Our Lord, and how great his patience, to say to the Philistines : I am pressed by two violent desires : I long to be dissolved and to be with Christ, *a thing by far the better*, and my greatest good. But to abide still in the flesh is needful for you. And having this confidence I know that I shall still abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and the joy of faith. And not content to deprive himself for some time of the sight of Our Lord and eternal beatitude, he goes farther, and resolves, according to the explanation of some to become anathema[1] for them. What patience ! What charity ! Moreover, what patience and courage are not necessary to accomplish an affair so advantageous to the salvation of the neighbor, in the midst of the machinations of the wicked! to rescue a soul plunged in the mire of iniquity, to break the chains that held it in rude captivity! Men will boil with rage, they will curse you, and, if they can, they will make you feel the effects of their vengeance ; demons, by the secret judgments of God, will give you marks of the rage they conceive against you, and of the despair you create in them by seizing their prey. They sought to stifle St. Ignatius ; they cruelly beat St. Francis Xavier; they threw St. Teresa on the ground, so that she broke her arm. What evils have they not sought to do to a multitude of Saints ! The apostolic man ought to be prepared for all, and to fear nothing ; the soldier who is afraid, and who caters for his life in the combat, will do nothing remarkable ; so the apostolic man whe is afraid to suffer, will never achieve great victories, will never amass

[1] Phil. 1. 23.

rich spoils ; he must be ready to undergo everything, for the salvation of souls and the glory of his Master.

We read that Sextus Tarquin, son of Tarquinus Superbus, having cut and wounded himself, fled to a distant city as though he was seeking refuge from the anger of his father, who he said had put him in this miserable state ; he knew so well how to ingratiate himself with the citizens that, by his artifices and caresses, she soon gained the town for his father, although heretofore it could not be gained by force of arms. The famous Topyre, a Persian, seeing that King Darius could not take the city of Babylon, though he had closely beseiged it for twenty months, cut off his nose, ears and lips, and in this state sought refuge among the Babylonians, as it were, from the barbarity of his prince, who he affirmed had hideously disfigured him without any cause, and of whom he said many injurious things. They received him, and believed his words, of the truth of which his wounds seemed so eloquent a testimony; and after some skirmishes, in which he combated valiantly against Darius, they made him governor of the city, which he afterwards delivered to his own prince. Apostolic men, considering such great courage and such passionate zeal for the honor of his father in Sextus, and in the servant Tophyre for the honor of his master, to gain them the possession of some town, ought they not brave a thousand times more for the glory of Our Lord, and procure Him entrance into the places He beseiges, that is to say, into the hearts of men, at the expense even of their lives ?

SECTION XXI.

ANOTHER VIRTUE NECESSARY FOR THE APOSTOLIC MAN.

HUMILITY.

I. Reasons drawn from the side of God.—II. From the apostolic man himself.—III. From utility to the neighbor.—IV. Conclusion.

I. Humility is a virtue as necessary to the apostolic man

as any of those of which we have spoken ; this I can prove from three sources. First, from the side of God ; for as God is infinitely jealous of His glory, and has said by His prophet: "I will not give My glory to another," it is certain that the humble man will preserve it carefully for Him, give it to Him entirely without abstracting the least portion : though endowed with great perfections of nature and grace, and an agent to accomplish heroic actions and achieve brilliant victories, among the plaudits and acclamations of an admiring public, he says sincerely and in the depth of his heart : *I am an unprofitable servant*,[1] as Jesus Christ teaches him ; and with the royal prophet : It is the arm of the Lord that has wrought wonders ;[2] while the proud man robs God of the glory due to Him, he can perform no charitable work with wholly pure intentions ; he seeks always in the least actions his own esteem to the prejudice of God's glory. It is then certain that humility is a disposition absolutely necessary to merit, to be employed by God in what regards His service and the accomplishment of His designs, and that pride is an essential hindrance to this office. Moreover, the humble man is of all men the one most filled with God and His Spirit, because the more he is void of self and of his own esteem, the more God replenishes his mind, which He finds empty. The more empty a man is, says St. Austin, the more capacious he is, and the more he is filled with God ; and as the Spirit of God tends always and in all things to His glory, it is evident that the humble man who is replenished with this Spirit, will be the most proper to labor for the honor and glory of God. *God is honored by the humble*, says the Sage. Finally, the humble man is, in the hands of God, the most proper instrument to do His will, because he offers the least resistance ; for resistance comes only from pride ; this vice of its nature renders man haughty,

[1] Luke xvii. 10. [2] Psalms.

and sets him even against God, as Job says. Humility, which is its opposite, renders man pliable to all the movements of God ; the humble man will never make the least opposition to the dispensations of providence, either in his acts or by his words, or even in his thoughts : thus God can use him without fear of opposition, now in one office, now in another. He places him in esteem and glory, or in opprobrium and contempt ; He makes him healthy or sick, rich or poor, according as He judges most useful for His glory and the salvation of souls. Hence God is accustomed to do great things by means of the humble. In the order of nature, to give more lustre to His wisdom and power, He uses the smallest things to produce the greatest effects, a grain of seed to produce a large tree, flies and gnats to beat down the pride of Kings and to ruin provinces ; so in the order of grace, He employs the lowly and the humble of heart to operate the greatest wonders. *Consider,* says St. Paul, *what your vocation is,* by which God deigns to call you to Himself : for so grand an enterprise He has not chosen the great, the wise, the learned, according to the flesh ; but the foolish things of this world hath God chosen, *and those that are not ;*[1] that is, those who are well grounded in humility by the knowledge and sentiment of their own unworthiness. It is commonly said that one can do nothing with nothing ; this holds for men whose power is very limited. Apelles could not paint his pictures without colors ; Phidias could not make his statues without marble ; Vitruvius his buildings without materials, and a mechanic, however expert he may be, can do nothing without matter to work on. It is not so with God, because His power is infinite ; of nothing he can make what he pleases. His most excellent works have come forth from nothing ; of nothing he created the angels, and He daily creates from the same, rsasonable souls, which

[1] Cor. i. 29.

are the masterpieces of His hands; of nothing He created the heavens, the sun, the stars, which by their movement, light and heat, govern inferior things and regulate the whole economy of things here below. He drew from the waters the birds and the fishes; He caused bodies to come forth from bodies; He drew sensitive and vegetative souls from the bosom of matter. Thus He never works more nobly than when He works on nothing. It is the same in the order of grace; He makes of nothing the heavens and the stars; that is, as the Saints explain, the Apostles and apostolic men of whom the royal prophet says: *The heavens declare the glory of God*,[1] that is, they enlighten the world by their life and doctrine. These words signify that God does His actions and works His wonders by means of the humble, who are nothing in their own estimation, and who in all they do, look upon themselves as nothing in the order of nature and grace. Thaulerus, a person highly enlightened, said on this subject: "God, to operate excellently and divinely, has need only of nothing which is more proper for His operations than anything else." Natural causes, as philosophers say, cannot act in a void; they are there stifled and have no action. God, on the contrary, never acts more freely or more excellently than in emptiness, and in the soul which is humble, because He finds there no impediment; and in order that He may do great things in it, He requires only to find it empty.

II. The second reason which proves the necessity of humility for an apostolic man, is his own advantage. Humility is so necessary to him that, without it, he is in great danger of being lost; for in his sermons, in the confessions he hears, in his visits and other functions, he is successful or unsuccessful: if successful, he is esteemed; people speak of him and are anxious to see him; they applaud him and seek to converse with him. He has, then, need

[1] Ps. xviii. 2.

of humility to keep himself steady on such a slippery road; to hinder these flames from stifling him; that he may not become vain-glorious, and that in his community he may preserve the modesty and respect one owes to another. Moreover, if humility do not sustain him and hinder his being carried away by these praises, as is only too easy for man, who so naturally desires his own glory, he will lose the fruit of his sermons and the recompense of his labors; after taking a great deal of trouble, he will, in this life, reap only the wind, and in the next the severe reproaches and chastisements of God. He will lose the peace and repose of his mind; for as the different functions of the ministry are full of different circumstances, his enterprises will be examined, his sentiments contradicted; designs which he believed very important to the salvation of souls, will be overthrown, and perhaps with good reason; in these contingencies murmurs against obedience will not be slow to put his soul in disorder if he be not sustained by humility. If unsuccessful, humility is not less necessary to support with patience, and without discouragement, the comparisons that will be established between him and more fortunate persons: humility is necessary to hinder his being piqued with jealousy and devoured with envy against them, to hear favorably and approve the praises given them, while not a good word is said of him, not to keep silence on matters which may serve to preserve and augment their credit, not to supplant them by artifices, and to avoid many other evils, whose source is in secret pride, and in the good opinion we have of ourselves, which prevents us from seeing ourselves as we are, and inclines us to place ourselves on a level with others, or even above them.

Again, humility is necessary to the apostolic man because it renders his soul fit to receive the knowledge of the things he is to announce, for it is to the humble they are discovered: Thou hast hidden these mysteries from the

wise and prudent, said Our Lord, and revealed them to *little ones:* yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy *sight.*[1] The reason of this is, that the humble man puts himself in a proper position to be enlightened by God. Mirrors to reflect objects ought to be at a certain distance, neither too near nor too far off; the more we retire from God by a sentiment of our own baseness, the more capable we become of receiving His lights; the more we pretend to approach Him by a good opinion of ourselves, the more unworthy are we of His favors. The burning mirror is a concave; its rays extend all around and are united in the focus; so the humble man receives in his concavity, if I may say so, the strongest and most abundant emanation of the Sun of Justice, and can easily inflame those with whom he treats.

III. In fine, the third reason for the necessity of humility in the apostolic man, comes from the advantage this virtue procures to his neighbor, for it must be remembered that nothing has more force than that which proceeds from humility and modesty; the proud are odious to all, while the humble are loved by all, because of the deference and honor they render to others, and which all naturally desire with ardor. It is said of St. Bernard, that the more humble he was, the more useful he became to the people of God in his discourses, whether public or private. It was by humility rather than by his other virtues that St. Severinus became the Apostle of Bavaria, and obtained so high a reputation in that nation that he easily drew it to salvation, and humility had made him so amiable and so venerable to all, that the pagans themselves respected him. To cut and polish the diamond, we must put on it the powder of another diamond; to conquer a heart hard as the diamond, and engrave Jesus Christ in the soul, we must be humble, regarding ourselves only as dust. To

[1] Matt. ix. 25.

save men, the Divine Word *humbled Himself, emptied Himself*,[1] says the Apostle; His abasement is the cause of our salvation, and our glory is the fruit of His opprobrium. "The Holy Virgin," says St. Bernard, "became agreeable to God by her virginity, but by humility she became worthy as far as possible to conceive His Son. If humility elevated her to the rank of Mother of God, humility rather than her other virtues renders her the powerful coadjutrix of our redemption, and makes her, next to her Son, the greatest instrument of our salvation." The greatest preacher, and he who has up to this produced most fruits in the Church, is St. Paul, and it is humility that made him what he was. Paul, says St. Austin, was first named Saul, that is to say, proud, like the first King of the Jews, of whom he held it, who pursued David to death and whom pride destroyed. Saul imitated him in persecuting the innocent—he proudly sought to destroy the Church; hence Our Lord said to him: *Saul, Saul*, that is, Pride, Pride, *why dost thou persecute Me?* Now Our Lord has overthrown Saul, and raised up Paul; He has prostrated the pride of the persecutor, and erected on its ruins the humility of the preacher. Besides, as the principal mysteries of our religion are grounded on the opprobrium of the Cross, how can the preacher announce them from the depth of his heart if that heart is full of vanity, and if he announces to his auditors a doctrine which he combats by his works? It is very difficult to speak approvingly and efficaciously of a thing one does not love; hence humility is necessary to the apostolic man to give weight and authority to his words, and to make them penetrate the hearts of those who hear them.

IV. The apostolic man, then, convinced by these reasons, must comprehend the necessity he has of this virtue, and earnestly strive to acquire and practice it. 1, In his inte-

[1] Phil. ii. 8. 7.

rior, by humbly acknowledging that all his talents, and all his fitness for the functions of the ministry, come from God; that whatever abilities he has, he can never penetrate the heart if God do not aid him, since he has said, *Without Me you can do nothing*[1]: he must consequently refer to God the fruits of his labors, as He is their true principle, and ought to be their only end; and when by his preaching or by any other means, he shall have contributed to the conversion of a soul, or to any other good work, he must say, like St. John, who after having, with St. Peter, labored uselessly all night, took one hundred and fifty three great fishes, by casting the nets on the side Our Lord indicated: *It is the Lord*,[2] it is He who has done all, to Him therefore the glory of all is due. Apostolic men *who bear and sustain the world*, says Job, *bow themselves* humbly *before* the power of *God*,[3] whom they adore as the principle of their works. 2. The apostolic man must practice humility exteriorly in his words, always speaking modestly of himself, not recounting his actions, nor attributing to himself the reputation he has, and the good success of his ministry, at least only inasmuch as it may be useful for the honor of his Master, but never for his own: in his actions, by teaching the ignorant according to necessity and circumstances, catechising children, preaching in villages, confessing the poor, visiting prisons and hospitals to instruct and console those who dwell in them, without fearing that these functions will diminish the esteem in which he is held, or cause him to lose his credit. This is an error which deceives many who think that to acquire, preserve and increase their reputation and the authority necessary to produce fruit, they ought to appear only in shining circumstances, preach only in great pulpits, confess only persons of rank, visit only the rich and noble. They are strangely deceived in this, and they must be very

[1] John xv. 3. [2] ibid xxi. 7. [3] Job ix. 13.

blind if they see not their error; for these things, so far from diminishing their authority, increase it, because they show them to be detached from the world, to be doers of what they preach, to have that sincere zeal and charity for their neighbor which enables them to surmount the repugnances of nature. The Cross is never better established than by the cross. When Our Lord appeared to His disciples after His Resurrection and gave them their mission to convert the world, He said to them: *As My Father hath sent Me, I also send you*;[1] as if He would say: My Father sent Me to convert and save men by humility, by the suffering of the Cross; I send you for the same design, and I give you the same means to execute it; for this reason He showed them the wounds which still remained in His Hands, as if to say: It is with these pierced hands that I have executed this great work; fear not to apply yours to actions which appear little, to finish what remains to be done.

Our Father, St. Ignatius, who was well versed in these things, was accustomed to say that those who aspire to great and elevated things, ought to begin by the lowest and smallest; hence he never sent out a workman to labor in the vineyard of Our Lord without recommending him to apply himself, above and before all things, to know and despise himself, assuring him that his labors would be agreeable to God and useful to his neighbor, in proportion as he became more solidly grounded in humility. When Fathers Alphonso Salmeron and Pasquier Broet were sent as nuncios to Ireland by the Pope, Ignatius charged them expressly to catechise children and instruct the ignorant. He gave the same charge to Father James Lainez and to Father Salmeron, when they set out for Trent in quality of theologians to Pope Paul III., expressly forbidding them to present themselves at this celebrated and august Coun-

[1] John xx. 21.

cil, until they had visited the hospitals and served the sick, taught the Christian doctrine to the ignorant of the city, and above all to little children. When he sent St. Francis Xavier and Simon Rodriguez to Portugal, he desired them as soon as they should arrive there, to beg alms from door to door, and to apply themselves carefully to the exercise of humility as the most proper means to gain souls ; and every one knows the great fruits they gathered by this means, and the glory they acquired the Company. It was by the practice of profound humility that St. Francis Xavier commenced his great and sublime work of the conversion of the infidels. He begged his bread in the vessel, though he was legate of the Holy See, and though the King of Portugal had given orders that he should be abundantly provided with everything requisite ; a great part of what was given him he refused, and the rest he divided with the poorest in the ship, and took as an alms the little he needed. When he arrived at Goa, the first thing he did was to cast himself at the feet of the Bishop of that city, John Albuquerque, to declare to him the motive of his coming, and to present him the Brief of the Pope, assuring him that he would use it only according to his direction. This profound humility in so great a person, so gained the heart of the good prelate that he returned the Brief, and bade Xavier use it as he pleased ; they became greatly attached, and always lived as united as if they had but one heart and soul. Humility, then, is not injurious but profitable ; it does not take away authority but gives it in abundance.

Besides, if the apostolic man desires the salvation of souls, as he certainly ought, are not the souls of the poor as precious as those of the rich? Are not the souls of laborers as noble as those of monarchs?—are they not all equally redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ? Is not the soul of a servant as precious in His eyes as the soul of

a princess? Yes, without doubt, it is often even more so, because it is better disposed to receive His grace. Hence if the apostolic man would acquit himself worthily of his functions, he must disabuse himself of all false ideas, and root out of himself the desire of the honor and esteem of men; let him not think of his reputation or his glory, but repose entirely on Jesus Christ, who will give him these things so far as is necessary for the accomplishment of His designs; he should occupy himself only in procuring the glory of His Divine Master and the salvation of souls, saying with this adorable Saviour: I seek not My own glory, another will seek it for Me, and will do me justice, I will labor for Him, and He will watch over me.

SECTION XXII.

OTHER VIRTUES NECESSARY TO THE APOSTOLIC MAN.

I. Poverty.—II. Contempt of earthly things.—III. Conformity to the will of God.—IV. Diffidence in self and confidence in God.

I. Poverty, interior and exterior, is also necessary for the apostolic man in order that, disengaged from the care of earthly things, his spirit be more free, that he may have more time to apply to his functions, and above all, that he may, by this generous contempt of earthly things, imprint profoundly on all hearts a true contempt of riches, and show that he makes infinitely more account of the glory of God and the salvation of souls than of all things else. Though the whole universe and all that it contains belong of right to Our Lord, yet He practiced the highest degree of poverty in His birth, His life and His death, and particularly recommended it to His Apostles. To acquit yourselves worthily of the great mission I give you, and to preach with fruit, possess *neither gold nor silver; freely give what you have freely received.*[1] The Apostles fulfilled this

[1] Matt. x. 9. 8.

precept in all its perfection. St. Paul says to Timothy: Having food and raiment, with these we are content. He says to the Corinthians: The Lord ordained that they who preach the Gospel, live by the Gospel,[1] and receive of those to whom they announce it the things necessary for their sustenance; *But I have used none of these things.* Neither have I written these things that they should do so unto me; for it is better for me to die rather than that any man should make my glory void.[2] Elsewhere he says: I preached unto you the Gospel of God freely. And when I was present with you and wanted, I was chargeable to no man; and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself. The truth of Christ is in me, and this glorying shall not be broken off in me in *the regions of Achaia.*[3] Our Lord said to St. Peter: *If you love Me, feed My sheep*;[4] that is to say, according to the explanation of St. Austin: If you love Me, think not of feeding yourself but feed My sheep; nourish them as Mine, and not as if they belonged to you; in the care you take of them, seek My glory and not yours, My interests and not yours.

Animated with this spirit, the apostolic man ought to make open profession of great poverty, entirely despoiled of affection to the goods of this earth, possessing nothing but what is absolutely necessary and desiring no more, not even accepting presents, unless great reasons oblige him to do so; for though he might lawfully do so, it would not always be safe for him. All things are lawful for me, says St. Paul, but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful for me but *all things do not edify*;[5] in the use of things, let no man seek his own satisfaction, but the salvation of others. And as all that is profitable for the salvation of our neighbor ought to be dear to us, so all that is hurtful to it ought to seem to us criminal. He who takes,

[1] Tim vi. 8. [2] Cor. ix. 14. [3] Cor. xi. 7. [4] John xxi. 17. [5] Cor. x. 22, 23, 24.

is often taken himself, and loses a part of the liberty which is necessary to do or say something useful for the well-being of the donor. Oh! how poor is the man who has nothing, and who wishes to have nothing but Jesus Christ, yet how rich he is, and how capable of great things! He can say with St. Peter to the lame, and to those who know not how to walk upright in the path of virtue: Silver and gold I have none, but what I have I give thee; in the Name of Jesus Christ stand up and walk; and at his word these cripples will be healed, and will enter the temple to praise and bless God.

II. Another virtue which refers to poverty and in which the apostolic man ought to excell is, a generous contempt of all earthly things; he ought always keep his soul lifted above what men esteem and admire. He who wishes to move the world, must, as Archimides said, rest his feet outside the world, that is, not be on the world but above it. If you wish to profit all creatures, says the enlightened Thaulerus, withdraw your heart from all creatures, to give it entirely to God. When I shall be elevated above the earth, said Our Lord, I will draw all to Myself.[1] He spoke of the death he had resolved to suffer on the Cross, because as Lactantius and others say, he who is fastened to a gibbet is above others to be seen by all; hence Jesus Christ on the Cross became so visible, and this in so sublime and brilliant a perspective that all nations, from all parts of the universe, fasten their eyes on Him. A man lifted above the earth with Jesus Christ, by perfect detachment from all perishable things, draws all to him. All that you tread under your *feet shall belong to you*;[2] you shall gain victories wherever you shall have exercised this contempt. Moses, says St. Ambrose, could have been successor to Pharaoh and have worn his crown, but he preferred the ignominies of Jesus Christ to all the treasures of Egypt. But by re-

[1] John xii. 32. [2] Deut. xi. 24.

fusing the dignities he could have acquired, he became more powerful, because he became the God of Pharaoh. Pharaoh was a king, but he was not a God ; Moses becomes as his God, that is, he is become terrible to him, and the prodigious power his sanctity gave him to confound the elements and overthrow the laws of nature, made this king fear and tremble. If then you wish, in transacting the business of God, to be as a God to sinners, to scare them, and to kings to force them to bend under your authority, despise what they esteem, and prefer the glorious opprobrium of the Passion of Our Lord to all the riches and honors of their kingdoms.[1] Behold the means St. Ambrose gave of acquiring a high reputation and a great power over men, to aid them in the work of their salvation. So when St. Francis Xavier refused the gold and silver which the king of Amanguez in Japan presented him, and besought this king to let him remain in his poverty and to give him, as the greatest favor, leave to announce the Gospel in his dominions—this refusal greatly astonished the pagan prince, who saw in Xavier a man that made no account of the wealth which others came to seek with such fatigue and eagerness, and imprinted on him so great an esteem for the Saint, so high a respect for his courage and generosity, that he easily gave him the permission he sought, and became himself disposed to listen favorably to him.

III. The conformity of his will to that of God is another virtue necessary to the apostolic man. He must be resigned as to the functions assigned him, and even as to the success of his labors, applying himself to the salvation of souls in the time, place and manner, and among the persons that God wills, seeking only the labors to which God calls him, without caring for others, and not seeking with burning desires and a species of passion, sometimes

[1] In Ps. 118. Serm.

hidden under the beautiful name of zeal. One can gather fruit only in the ministry to which God destines him ; we must then quietly await God's call, receive with joy and love all the dispositions He makes of us, as coming from Him, and apply ourselves to our duties with all our heart, to please Him. All whom My Father hath given Me shall come to Me, said Our Lord, and I will not cast out him that cometh to Me on His part ; for I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me! The apostolic man ought not to be troubled lest there should not be souls for him to labor among. Let him render himself eminently fit for his ministry and God will send him enough who will even come to him from afar off ; let him apply himself to those God sends him, without agitating himself about others, after the example of Our Lord, who would not announce His doctrine to the Gentiles, because as He Himself said, He was sent only to the house of Israel. As regards success, which sometimes corresponds not to the labor, the apostolic man must abandon himself entirely to the will of God, whose judgments, as to this point, are often inscrutable, permitting that the labors of some have great success, while those of others, not inferior in virtue or capacity, are almost useless. The will of God must be his desire in this as in all else. What ought to console him is, that he is not obliged to produce fruit in the soul, but only to labor to do so ; he is not obliged, as St. Bernard remarks, to give them health but remedies. The angels themselves, who have incomparably more zeal and ability than man, said that they labored to cure Babylon, and could not accomplish it.[1] Our Lord, who could with a single word touch all hearts, and convert all souls with His preachings and conversations, nevertheless converted but few. It is said that St. James converted only seven persons in all Spain. The work depends on us,

[1] Jerem. li. 9.

the success depends on God ; it is His affair. We must take it as He is pleased to give it.

IV. Finally, as the duties of the apostolic man are full of mental and physical pains, as the end surpasses His power and all the power of nature, since he acts for the conversion of sinners and the infusion of grace into souls, he ought to have great diffidence in himself and great confidence in God, who will not fail to assist him and give him the strength necessary for so sublime an undertaking. As to his labors, he ought to consider, encourage and sustain himself by the consideration of the glory of God, the accomplishment of His will, the excellence of this mission, the salvation of souls so noble and elevated, his own advantage, which is so great that it surpasses all that can be said. Those who instruct many into justice, said the angel to Daniel, shall shine like stars for all eternity.[1] He that shall do and shall teach, shall be great in the kingdom of Heaven,[2] said Our Lord. "It is a probable opinion," as St. Odo, Abbot of Cluny, teaches, "that each will rise with the souls he shall have gained to Jesus Christ, and that he will present himself for judgment in the midst of that glorious company. At the judgment day, says St. Gregory, St. Peter will appear before Our Lord with Judea, which he converted, St. Paul will lead after him the world that he instructed ; St. Andrew will come with Achaia, St. John with Asia, St. Thomas with India, where he shed the light of the Gospel—all those who labor in the salvation of souls will appear before their judge, conducted in triumph in the midst of those they shall have conquered to Christ." At the death of blessed Seraphim, a very zealous religious, a holy man saw the heavens opened, and seventy thousand souls came out to meet him and bear him in triumph to heaven. At the same time he heard these words : Is it

[1] Dan. xii. 3. [2] Matt. v. 19.

not just that we should accompany to paradise the soul of him who conducted us there by his labors and instructions? What glory! what joy for an apostolic man! And certainly such a recompense is due to his labors, and ought to sweeten the pains of them. If he have not the happiness to convert so many persons, let him not be troubled, or cease to labor earnestly, for he shall be rewarded according to the pains he shall have taken, and which would be sufficient to convert a great number, if God permitted; for as St. Paul says, *Each shall receive his salary*, not according to the success he obtains, but *according to his work*.[1] Behold the virtues most necessary for those who labor to save souls, and the most important counsels we have to give them; but as these counsels suit all in general, we think it necessary to give some particular advice to Superiors, preachers and confessors, who fulfill the first offices in what regards the salvation of souls.

SECTION XXIII.

ADVICE TO SUPERIORS.

I. How difficult it is to conduct men.—II. We must accept this office if God calls us to it.

I. St. Gregory the Great, considering the redoubtable burden of those who guide others, a burden which he himself bore, pronounced this sentence, which is as true as it is celebrated: "The guidance of souls is the art of arts." Before him, St. Gregory Nazianzen had said, on the same subject: "It is certain that the governing of souls is the art of arts, the science of sciences; nothing in this world is more difficult." Before these two Fathers, Plato had said in one of his letters, that the older he grew and the more he considered the laws, customs and manners of the people, the more difficult he found it to govern them. St.

[1] Cor. iii. 8.

Gregory Nazianzen uses, to explain this difficulty, the following comparison: The body is a gross mass, subject sooner or later, to the empire of death, despite of all the remedies of physicians; the soul is a spiritual substance, immortal and divine. Those who are ill in body feel their pain, desire their cure, ask and seek it; the remedies given them produce effect naturally and without opposition, while the remedies applied to the maladies of the soul experience great resistance on the part of self-love and a depraved will. The sick are insensible to their wounds, they even like them; often they prefer sickness to health. The greater part of the maladies of the body are visible and palpable, and can therefore be easily healed; but those of the soul are hidden, the corporal eye sees them not; to destroy them invisible enemies must be combated. As to the end proposed, corporal physicians seek only to preserve health in those who possess it, and restore it to those who have lost it; but spiritual physicians have in view an object more elevated and sublime. They seek to give to souls wings to lift themselves above perishable things, and dart even to the bosom of God; they must preserve in souls the lineaments of the Divine image, or engrave them anew if they have been effaced—entrance must be made in these souls for the grace of the Holy Spirit; they must be rendered like to God and fit to participate in the beatitude for which they have been created. Thus St. Gregory shows the difficulty of conducting souls. And effectually, if man is a little world shut up in a great one, or rather, a great world enclosed in the little world, it follows that to govern a man is to govern a world, and that he carries many worlds who has many men to conduct. What Atlas would not stagger under such a burden! Lord, said the Royal Prophet, Thou hast set men over our heads[1]—a heavy burden when only laid on the shoulders, but more

[1] Ps. 65. 12.

so when laid on the head, because it demands the entire application of the mind ; and, moreover, the care he must have of those with whom he is charged, places the superior beneath those over whom he watches, and renders him as their servant.

All these reasons, no doubt, eloquently prove the difficulty of governing others, but St. Paul furnishes us with another, which shows this difficulty in a still clearer light. To oblige inferiors to submission and obedience, he says to, them : Obey your prelates, for they watch as having to render an *account of your soul* to God[1]—frightful words and calculated to cast terror into the hearts of all Superiors. St. Paul says their duty obliges them to two things—to watch and to render an account. *They watch*, behold the first ; and according to the force of the word, *they watch much*, and labor greatly, if they wish to acquit themselves of their charges, which are truly charges and burdens ; for were inferiors as holy as angels, yet the Superior must always feel great solicitude about them, though it were only in temporal things. But men are not angels, their lives always savor of the earth on which they live ; the cares of exterior things are not those which give most pains, but the cares of interior things and of salvation. It is over these that Superiors ought to watch. They ought to be like the shepherds who came to visit Our Lord at His birth. They slept not, says St. Luke ; they were watching over their flocks when the angel of the Lord came to announce to them the glad tidings. *They have to give an account of your souls;* behold the second thing to which Superiors are obliged. This is the great peril, says St. Thomas, that a man be responsible for the actions of others while he has so much pain to give an account of his own. O God, exclaims St. Chrysostom, what danger for the Superior who is obliged to render an account of those

[1] Hebrews xiii. 17.

under his charge, and not only of all in general but of each in particular, on whose conduct he shall be examined, judged and punished! Let him think seriously, says St. Gregory, that having already great trouble to satisfy God for himself in particular, as many other souls will appear on whose conduct he will be interrogated, as he has subjects. If this thought penetrate well into his mind, it will certainly arrest the slightest movements of the complacency that the dignity of the Superior might inspire; I say more —this thought will keep him in continual terror.

And, in truth, what a subject of terror!—since God, whose justice is so tremendous, says, in the Holy Scripture: *Guard this man* whom I give you as a deposit, watch over him; *if he come to be lost, you shall render to Me an account of his soul;*[1] you shall answer for his ruin, since, on the day of judgment I will say to the Superior: *Where is the flock I confided to thee?—where are the precious lambs*[2] which have cost me so dear? How hast thou nourished them?—how hast thou fed them?—how hast thou defended them against the ravening wolf? *What answer will he make to these terrible questions?* In conducting his subjects badly, *he has conducted them against himself:*[3] they shall cry out for vengeance against him, and accuse him of being the cause why they did not advance in virtue, why they did not acquire the immense treasures they could have acquired, why they attained not the degree of perfection to which they were called, why they did not receive the graces and favors which God had prepared for them, if they were well directed. And seeing himself in these terrible straits, will not the Superior *experience the anguish of a woman who groans in the agonies of parturition?*[4] God will exercise extreme rigor on those who shall have *commanded others*, says the Holy Ghost, in the Book of Wisdom.

After this, who will not quake and fear at the least

[1] Reg. xx. 39. [2] Jerem. xiii. 20. [3] ibid. [4] Jerem. xxiii.

charge of souls imposed upon him? And is it not easy to see that those who desire superiority and seek it, are very blind; or that, if they know all these dangers, they make little account of their eternal salvation, to sacrifice it for so small a thing? Alas! it is not easy for a good man to bear his own sins, the lightest of which is a heavy burden—he has surely no need to charge himself with the sins of others: it will be a dreadful thing for him to answer for his own works at the tribunal of God. How then can he desire to assume those of others, and thus augment his responsibility? It is probable that many are damned, because of their subjects, who would certainly be saved had they taken care only of themselves. What the Holy Scripture says is only too true: It happens sometimes that a man acquires rule over another *for his own misfortune;*[1] this authority only precipitates him into hell. Hence we see that the Saints dreaded these charges, and did all they could to avoid them when they had them not, and to resign them when they had them. Our Lord, who has reigned in heaven over the blessed spirits from the beginning of the world, would not reign on earth. Foreseeing that those whom He had miraculously fed in the desert, would try to take Him by force and make Him their king, He hid Himself and retired alone to a mountain. "Now, who had more perfectly and more holily governed men," asks St. Gregory, "than He who could govern with infinite wisdom those whom He created by His infinite power?"[2] But, adds the same Doctor, because he was clothed with our nature, not only to deliver us from death, but also to instruct by His example, He fled the glory of royalty, and embraced voluntarily the infamy of a shameful death.

II. Though the difficulties and dangers of conducting others be as great as we have described, and even greater, yet those whom God has called to it must not obstinately

[1] Eccl. viii. 9. [2] Pastor. i. p. cap. 3.

refuse to accept it, for in refusing, through fear of offending God, they would really offend Him; aad wishing thus to preserve grace, they would lose it, and so of many other gifts which have been given them, less for themselves than for the good of others. If it be humility that restrains them, St. Gregory says very well on that point: "Humility is true and sincere before God, when it does not obstinately refuse what he enjoins; for he ought not to be considered truly humble who, knowing that God wills him to conduct others, refuses to obey." The truly humble man flees obstinacy and submits to what God requires of him; he fears offices because of the honors which follow them, but he humbly bends his shoulders to receive them when he is certain God commands him. There are some who, too passionately attached to repose, retreat and the delights of contemplation, resist only through fear of being deprived of these things: this is merely self-love, a search of their own ease, and on the judgment day they will be found culpable, says this great Pope, of as many sins as they could have hindered by conducting well the souls over whom God had willed to give them authority; and they shall render an account of all the good works of which they should have been the cause. "But how can they remain in retreat and not quit it for the salvation of their brethren, when they see the only Son of God come forth from the bosom of His Father and dwell among us for the salvation of souls?"[1] The good servant serves his master according to that master's will, and prefers his interests to his own: if his master is good, he will know how to sustain and defend him. Our Father, St. Ignatius, said that if Our Lord gave him his choice either to quit this life and go immediately to enjoy Him in heaven, or to remain some time longer on earth in the uncertainty of dying in grace, he would take the second alternative if, by doing so, he knew that he

[1] Pastor. i. p. c. 5.

could render Him some service ; and he added : " Where is the prince or king who, if he should offer some signal favor to one of his servants, and that the latter refused it to do something advantageous to him, would not feel bound to watch over this servant affectionately, to augment his goods, since this servant exposes himself to such pains for love of him ? If men would act thus, what ought we not to hope from our Lord ? How can we fear that He will desert us or permit us to fall, when for love of Him we relinquish our delights and even the enjoyment of Himself, and expose ourselves to the peril of losing Him ? Let others believe of Him what they please, as for me, behold the opinion I have of His goodness and fidelity." Cardinal Bellarmine, writing to a prelate on this subject, says, among other things : " If it has pleased our Creator and Redeemer to place us in the midst of dangers, who are we that we should dare say to Him : Why hast Thou treated me so? He who loves us and has given His life for us, deigned to say to St. Peter, and in his person to all prelates, *If you love Me, feed My sheep.* Who will have the hardihood to reply : I do not wish to feed your sheep, lest I lose my own soul ? This would be to show that he loved himself and not God. He who truly loves God, says with the Apostle : I would rather be anathema and separated from Jesus Christ for the salvation of my brethren than fly the charge which the love of God imposes on me, and there is certainly no peril for salvation where such charity reigns ; for though our ignorance and weakness may make us commit many faults, still we know that *charity covereth a multitude of sins.*"

Hence if any one is really called by God to accept some office, let him humbly obey, in sentiments of great confidence and firm hope, that God will help him. If God has not called him he must beware of ingratiating himself, otherwise he will fall over the precipice. It is a great

wonder if such a person could be saved, says St. Chrysostom, for if those even who accept offices through necessity and by force, run great risks of being lost, what is to become of those temerarious persons who thrust themselves into employments and receive dignity only through the door of ambition?" Aaron was made High Priest by God, and yet he was in great danger of being lost, on account of having a hand in the idolatry of the golden calf. Moses, though a great servant of God, was excluded from the promised land, to gain which he had done so much, because of some faults he had committed in conducting the people of God. Saul was consecrated King of Israel by the express command of God, after even trying to avoid this honor; yet because he did not fulfil as he ought the duties of his charge, he was abandoned by God, lost his life combating against the Philistines; and the manner of his death leaves us in great doubt as to his salvation. Let those whom God does not call to offices, beware of seeking them unless they want to ruin themselves, and let those whom He calls bow their heads under the yoke, and submit themselves to His will.

But as it sometimes happens that those even whom God calls to charges, are lost in them, as we see in the case of Saul, because though they hold their power of God, yet they do not exercise it according to His will; I will here give some advice drawn from the doctrine and experience of the Saints which, if acted on, will preserve them from so terrible a calamity.

SECTION XXIV.

CONTINUATION.

I. Things necessary for a Superior: an exemplary life.—II. The practice of prayer.—III. He ought to lead his subjects by divine motives.—IV. He should be humble.—V. Without meanness.—VI. He should be sweet and patient.—VII. Inferiors ought to support the defects of superiors.

I. The first thing necessary to a good Superior is a holy

and exemplary life. "The Superior," says St. Gregory the Great, "should excell all others in the practice of virtue, that his holy life may be a continual voice to teach the rules of sanctity, and that the flock which sees and hears him may be guided rather by his example than by his words. As he is obliged by his position to teach men the most sublime and perfect way, he is also obliged to present them with a model of this perfection and sublimity in himself."[1] The Superior is the soul of the house, which has no movement but what he gives it ; the clock which regulates well or ill all the actions done in it ; the end which subjects aim at, the model on which they form themselves. As is the judges so are the ministers, says Solomon ; and such as is the prince of the city, so are its inhabitants.[2] He is, as St. Gregory well says, what the face is to the body : it is the face which is particularly observed ; by the face we recognize a man ; in the face nature has been pleased to fix the richest traits of her beauty.

The Superior is, then, strictly bound to live piously, and, as an ancient Father said, he ought to shine in the midst of his subjects, since the Lord set him among them as a lamp. Since he is the power of the moral body, he ought surely be its most beautiful part ; and it is beyond all doubt that he is much more strictly bound to live religiously, to mortify his appetites, to elevate himself above his nature, to avoid all defects, than if he were only a simple religious, because he is the first spring which gives motion to the rest ; his actions ought to serve as models, his faults are like eclipses of the sun, which are seen by all, which cast discord into the harmony of the universe, and disturb all nature. The Superior may well believe that the greater part of the faults of his subjects come from his, that he fails in many duties, as in patience, sweetness, zeal, humility or charity, or in other virtues which ought to

[1] Pastor. 2. p. cap. 3. [2] Eccles. x. 2.

shine forth in his conduct. St. Fortunatus, Bishop of Poictiers, speaking of St. Germanus, who from being an Abbot in Autun was made Bishop of Paris, says that in so eminent a dignity he remitted nothing of the austerities and exercises he was accustomed to make in his monastery; that he even increased them, as if his dignity imposed this as an obligation upon him. Father Balthazar Alvarez, who had received of God great gifts to govern well, regarded as the fundamental point of good government, that the Superior be always the foremost of all in the practice of virtue, in order that his words may have the proper efficacy, and that his subjects should be without excuse if they fall into defects. The consequence will be, what Our Lord said, speaking of the good Shepherd: He will go before his sheep, and he must never forget that the reformation of his inferiors depends on his own reformation; that they learn observance of rules by the manner in which he observes them, and that if he neglects them to apply to other business, his discourses will be without effect, because his life is without light, and he himself does not practice what he preaches. A still greater master, St. Peter, says: *Neither as lording it over the clergy, but being made a pattern to the flock from the heart*;[1] let not pastors place the force of their government in their authority, but in the power of their example, proposing themselves to their flocks as models of a holy life. In the same idea, St. Paul wrote to his disciple Timothy, whom he had made Bishop of Ephesus: Be thou an example to the faithful in word, and conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity. The same Apostle wrote to Titus, Bishop of Dandia: Be a model of good works in all things. The Greek bears, *render yourself a type*. St. Paul would say, as St. Jerome interprets the text, that the Superior ought to be as a protctype and an original, on whom subjects can

[1] Peter v. 3.

trace excellent copies of all virtues. In fine, he should give them reason to say, what was said of St. Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh, in Ireland : He was the rule of his people, and each read in his life and in his conduct how he ought to regulate his own.

II. Secondly, the Superior ought to be a man of prayer and accustomed to communicate with God. It is for this reason that, among us, the first rule of the rector is that he apply himself carefully to this holy exercise ; and, as our holy Founder says, he must bear and uphold on his shoulders the whole weight of the college by his prayers and holy desires. As men belong to God as His masterpieces and His images, and to Our Lord as His members and His conquests, and tend to a supernatural and divine end, the eternal possession of God, so the guidance of men is a very sublime and elevated ministry ; hence, besides prudence and other qualities which are useful but not sufficient, a Superior has need of the particular assistance of God and of a supernatural quality, which St. Paul calls *the gift of government,* and of the gift of wisdom which enlightens its possessor, not only in celestial things, but also, as St. Thomas teaches, to transact human business, not only his own but that of others, according to divine rules, and he should therefore earnestly beg it of God. And surely, if there is need of intelligence to govern the heavens, which produce nothing by their movements but stones, plants and animals—if it was necessary to communicate to Beseleel an increase of capacity and to replenish him, as the Scripture says, with wisdom and science, merely to construct the tabernacle ; if Solomon, to build his temple asked of God some rays of the infinite wisdom with which He designed and constructed this beautiful universe, saying : Send her forth from heaven, from Thy sanctuary, and from the throne of Thy glory, that she may be with me, and labor with me, and that I may know what pleases Thee— what

science and what wisdom must not be necessary to raise, not inanimate bodies, but free souls, to noble designs?—to render them vessels fit to receive the grace of God, and the eternal instruments of his glory?—to make them living temples far different from the tabernacle and from the temple of Solomon, where God shall be adored forever, not by the blood of animals, but by the innocent sacrifices of good affections and holy thoughts? It needs, without doubt, a higher wisdom, and as man, however skilful he is, cannot have it of himself, he must necessarily seek it by his prayers.

Moreover, experience proves to us an admirable diversity among the dispositions of men; and the lineaments of their features are not more different than the inclinations and sentiments of their souls. "Man," says St. Gregory Nazianzen, "is the most diversified of animals; you find no two men alike. Some must be led by words, others by example; some must be spurred on to make them go, others reined in to keep them back. Praise is good for some, it gives them new vigor; others it inflates and causes to commit many faults; some have to be encouraged, others repressed. Among the latter, some must be reprehended in secret, others in public. If the reprimand is lively and strong, it is good for some; it would be bad for others. Some must be corrected with the greatest sweetness, even their least mistakes must not be passed over; to others we must often close the eyes and seem not to see them, lest the too great light should only pain them, as their eyes are very weak. In fine, great capacity and profound discernment are requisite to know what is proper to each, to guide each according to his character and the bent of his humor. The Superior has to be as watchful, in order to govern well and not to be deceived, as those who walk upon a cord have, in order to preserve their equilibrium, and not to fall." Now, who can promise himself so great

[4] Sap. 9. 10.

an abundance of lights, and so vast a capacity of mind, unless he expect them of Him who has created men and given to each his bent and inclination? If a man finds it hard enough to remark and distinguish his own sentiments, and if in watching over himself with the greatest care, many things escape him, if he cannot acquire an entire knowledge of himself, how can he know others, into whose hearts he cannot enter to see what passes in them? The Superior must then apply to prayer, that he may be instructed in what he does not know, and to supply that in which he is deficient.

In affairs spiritual and temporal there often arise difficulties which the most subtle and experienced men cannot manage, and which to conduct, in a proper manner, the Superior must seek his lights and graces in prayer. Hence the Saints always had recourse to God before undertaking anything, that they might begin and finish in Him and with Him. Let us remember, that to deliberate well on a thing a good thought is necessary, of which God is the principle, and that to obtain success, God must bless the action; for it often happens that a thing, well examined and well matured, and conducted with great prudence, has not a happy success, because events depend on God. Thus, David would do nothing without first communicating with God in the tabernacle. "It is the daily practice of all good Superiors," says St. Gregory, quoting this example, "when they are embarrassed in difficult and dubious affairs, to retire into the recesses of their hearts as into a mystic tabernacle; there they examine the divine law and ask of God counsel and light, as if they were before the ark." Josue and the chiefs of the people of Israel were deceived for having failed in this practice, when the Gabaanites fraudulently asked their friendship, and they bore the pain of it, because, says the sacred text, *they had not counselled the Lord.* St. Bernard kept this rule inviolably

in the affairs he had continually on hands, and which he brought to such a happy issue. Convinced by a particular experience, says the historian of his life, he advised others in all things to lean more on prayer than on lights and labor. St. Bonaventure says of St. Francis: Prayer sustained this holy patriarch in all his actions; he diffided in his own lights, and confided in God, and after earnest prayer he referred all results to Him. St. Charles Borromeo never began any affair till he had spent a long time in mental prayer; prayer preceded, accompanied and finished all his actions, because, as his historian wisely says, prayer is the mother of prudence, by the communion it holds with the infinite wisdom of God and the first Truth, and because, by its aid, all our actions are so well directed that they are blameless before God and man. Our Father, St. Ignatius, observed the same rule; he undertook nothing of importance, however good or useful, without consulting God by prayer, in order to learn from Him how to act. Superiors ought to follow these examples, if they do not wish to commit faults at every step, of which afterwards Superiors and subjects shall have reason to repent.

III. Thirdly, the Superior must govern his subjects by spiritual reasons and divine motives for the glory of God and their salvation, and not by temporal considerations or by the rules of human prudence. The Church of God should not be governed with artifice, or by the prudence of the flesh, *which is the enemy of God*, says St. Paul; but with justice and truth, as St. Thomas of Canterbury remarked when writing to Pope Alexander III. and the Cardinals, on the difference he had with Henry II., King of England. St. Chrysostom says, speaking of the qualities of a good Superior, that he ought not to regulate his conduct by the usages of the world, nor make too much account of the things of this life, but that he ought to regulate all with reference to the other life. He cites on this subject these

words of St. Paul: *Our conversation is in heaven*; and as the Greek text bears, according to the interpretation of Budens, our conduct, our mode of governing is all heavenly Even reason teaches us to act thus, for we are only strangers on earth. Heaven is our true country, where our parents, our friends, our hopes and all our goods are. Tertullian has translated the above text thus: "Our country is heaven." Hence it is just that the Superior conduct his subjects according to the laws of heaven, and not according to those of earth. Moreover, God exacts this, since He has put the Superior in His place that he might conduct to Him the souls he has confided to him. He desires that they shall be governed according to His spirit and not according to the spirit of any other. And as the Superior wishes his subjects to obey him as God commands, it is just that he command them as God wills, and the more so, as it is far more difficult to our corrupt nature to obey than to govern. Inferiors desire it, for they have not quitted the world to be ruled by its maxims; they submit themselves to obedience only that they may be directed according to the orders of God. In following this rule, the good make great progress in virtue, and find the yoke of religion light; the bad correct themselves, and even the most indocile are more easily moved by reasons, that concern their eternal salvation, than by mere temporal reasons; for, in whatever disposition people may be, there is no one who wishes to be lost. Not that on certain occasions we may not try these temporal reasons with certain persons, for this may be lawfully and usefully done, but we must never place all the force in *them;* they must be used as auxiliaries.

It must be concluded that, since the Superior ought to govern his subjects in a spiritual manner, and by divine reasons, he is necessarily obliged to love spiritual things, and to incline others by his words and example to love

them and apply to them. Men often deceive themselves on this point, by believing those proper to govern who have a great capacity for exterior things, to preserve and augment temporal goods, etc., though they be but poorly versed in interior things. This is a very dangerous error; for as one does not enter Religion to seek there temporal goods, since he has abandoned them, but eternal goods, it is evident that the principal science of the Superior ought to bear upon eternal things; that his first care ought to be to perfect in them the souls of his subjects, and the more so, as by this manner of proceeding, temporal goods cannot fail unless the words of Jesus Christ be untrue: Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice; take chiefly to heart your advancement in virtue, and fear nothing, for *all other things will be added to you.*[1] The Superior, then, must give his chief care to interior things; he must, as is said of Moses, lead his flock to the midst of the desert;[2] he must of course apply them to exterior things, but he must always begin by the interior, and thus the exterior things will flourish the more; and he ought to be regarded as the best Superior who best knows how to fill the house with the grace of God and the riches of heaven, rather than with temporal commodities.

IV. The Superior must be solidly humble. *Have they made thee a ruler?* says the Sage. *Be not lifted up* because you hold the first rank; *be as one among them.*[3] And elsewhere: *The greater thou art the more humble thyself in all things.*[4] Olympus was said to be the most elevated of all mountains, because it had on its summit ashes which the wind did not disperse—the Superior who is the most elevated in the house, ought always to bear, in the pre-eminence of his position, the remembrance of his baseness, and never to forget that he is only dust. You know, said

[1] Matth. vi. 33. [2] Exod. iii. 1. [3] Eccl. xxxii. 1. [4] ibid. iii. 20.

Our Lord to His Apostles, that the princes of the Gentiles lord it over them; and they that have power over them are called beneficent. But not so you: *but he that is the greater among you let him become as the younger;* and he that is the leader as he that serveth. *I am in the midst of you as he that serveth. Neither lord it over the clergy,* says the Prince of the Apostles, *but be humble and modest.*[1] God thus reproaches certain superiors by Ezechiel: *The weak you have not strengthened, and the sick you have not healed, but you have ruled over them with rigor and with a high hand.*[2] St. Basil, treating on this subject, says and repeats in pressing terms, that the most necessary virtue and the most important quality in a Superior is humility, which ought to shine in all his works, that he may serve as a model to his inferiors; for, he adds, if the end of Christianity is to imitate, as far as we can, the life Our Lord led on earth, and if he has practiced this virtue in so special a manner that He said Himself: *Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart;* he who is placed over others ought, without doubt, to precede them in the exercise of this virtue, that he may facilitate, by his example, this means of becoming like Our Lord, and be able to say with St. Paul: *Be ye imitators of me,* as I am of Christ. Humility, concludes this Father, is the proper character and the greatest ornament of superiority.

Moreover, it is humility which, before God, elevates the Superior, and establishes him in his charge, whereas pride lowers him and eventually deprives him of his office. St. Gregory says: "Saul gained the kingdom of Israel by his humility, he lost it by his pride; since God said to him: Is it not because thou art little in thy own eyes that I have established thee over the tribes of Israel? When he was little in his own eyes, he was great in the eyes of God; when he became great in his own eyes, he became little in

[1] I Pet. v. 3. [2] Ezech. xxxiv. 4.

the eyes of God." Besides, it is humility that must secure the salvation of the Superior; for, as the same Doctor says: "If the human mind permits itself to be carried away by vanity, though it have no advantage above others, but merely through its natural inclination and its own misery, how much more will it be carried away if it is raised above others, unless it take great care. If the head becomes giddy in a valley where it is sheltered from storms, how can it be kept erect in a mountain where the winds reign?" Humility is not less necessary if he desire to render his government mild, and to make himself amiable to his subjects. There must, then, be nothing in his orders, words, or gestures that savors of *hauteur*, or a domineering spirit; all must savor of modesty, and be expressive of the respect he has for each of his children. To do this the more easily he must often remember that, as the man of God, Father Balthazar Alvarez said, to be a Superior is not to be a lord and to have servants at command, but to be a governor of princes, the servant of the children of God, of whom he must take care; that it is to have authority over men, but over free men, who, through love of God, have embraced a voluntary servitude; that their souls are spouses of Jesus Christ and temples of the Holy Ghost; the Superior must remember that his office does not make him better than his inferiors, and that a man who pilots a vessel is not therefore better or nobler than the passengers, among whom there may be kings and princes; though the Superior be first in authority, many of his inferiors may be higher in virtue, and if he walks before them in this life, he may perhaps walk far behind them in the next.

V. The Superior ought to be humble, but his humility must not degenerate into meanness; it must be dignified, "lest," says St. Gregory, "in lowering himself more than is becoming, he lost part of his authority, and that in

abasing himself unadvisably before ignorant persons, he should not afterwards be able to secure their respect. He must practice humility, but he must remember that he may, without pride, respect his authority and cause it to be respected." The humility of a Superior ought to be venerable by its gravity; the union of these two virtues will win the love and respect of his subjects. Be grave, but without austerity, wrote St. Bernard to Pope Eugenius; guard against two vicious extremes, be neither too familiar nor too reserved; preserve a just medium, that severity may not render you disagreeable to others, and that familiarity may not cause your authority to be despised. Too great austerity repulses the weak, gravity restrains the froward; reserve in words is always useful, provided it be not devoid of the graces and meekness necessary in conversation; and, to say all in a word, I will tell you that it seems to me a Superior should be grave in his actions, serious in his words, and gracious in his deportment.

VI. The Superior should regard love, sweetness and patience as the chief bonds of his government, which attach his subjects to him. Let him, then, love them with the bowels of cordial charity and the love of a father, since he bears the name of father; let him go farther, and have for them the tenderness of a mother, showing them the greatest kindness, giving them all that he can reasonably give them, allowing them whatever they seem to desire, provided it be not hurtful to their salvation. He must bear their defects with patience, console the afflicted, encourage the weak, run to the assistance of all, foresee all their wants; he must forget himself to think of their spiritual and temporal necessities; in fine, he must give all reason to believe that he despises no one, that he esteems, loves and cherishes them all. Let his love be pure, holy, and divine, and an emanation of that which God has for the souls confided to his charge; let him not indulge particu-

lar attachments, but extend his affection equally to all, since all have a right to it as to a common good. Let kindness and sweetness shine in all his words and actions, in his whole conduct; let him, above all, beware of being led away by anger. Meekness should be his element; it should accompany him in all his actions; and if sometimes his zeal makes him quit it, let him speedily return to it, as the fish hastens to precipitate itself into water. Our Sovereign Pontiff, Jesus, says St. Denis, asks of pastors to prove the love they bear Him by governing His sheep with the greatest meekness.

This is a point of extraordinary importance: a calm, sweet Superior renders himself extremely amiable and venerable to his subjects by this calm and sweetness; he acquires great power over their minds and works great fruits in them; he easily penetrates them because he has the key; he quiets their weariness, solaces their pains, heals their infirmities, appeases their troubles; he allows them to come to him when they please, gives them confidence to speak to him and courage to declare to him all their griefs. But if he is passionate, the contrary happens, by showing the little power he has over himself he loses most of what he had over his inferiors; he makes himself contemptible since he suffers himself to be vanquished by his passion; he shows himself unworthy of commanding others since he knows not how to command himself; he is precipitate in his resolves, rash in his words, agitated in his actions; he is difficult of access, for one is always doubtful whether he is in good or bad humor; he disturbes the quietest; he does not console the afflicted, he rather augments their trouble, he abates the courage of the weak, he makes the yoke of religion a heavy one. Hence St. Pacomius, Superior of so many monks, feeling once an emotion of anger just in itself, and which did not appear outside, complained bitterly to God, saying that he should

no longer be fit to govern others, unless indeed he were freed from this passion and endowed with unalterable patience. Let the Superior, then, strive to practice meekness ; let him banish from his heart anger and ill humor ; let him treat his subjects with suavity and receive them with serenity of mind and countenance, and an air of graciousness and goodness : let him not forget that this is one of the most dangerous and slippery points ; for one will come to him to expose his wants and seek the remedy of them, another will come for some other object at a time when he will be overwhelmed with business ; meekness and patience run great risks on such occasions. He must always then have presence of mind to receive them in an agreeable manner, to hear them peaceably and without rebuff, to speak graciously to them and not to send them away without giving them the solace they may reasonably hope to receive from him.

VII. The Superior ought to watch over this as the most important point of his charge ; but I say also, for the instruction of inferiors, that though the Superior ought to be replenished with sweetness and goodness and be perfect master of his anger, yet if he is sometimes a little excited they ought to excuse him and bear with him, because it is very difficult in such a great multitude of occupations and in such a great diversity of circumstances, to preserve always a perfect equality of mind and words, without even evincing any emotion ; there needs only an ill-conducted affair, a displeasure caused by the fault of some one, an indisposition of soul or body, a bilious temperament, to make him lose a little of his sweetness. If in the midst of all these, you find him not always in good humor when you would communicate with him ; if you receive not all the satisfaction you expected, have patience, bear this little cross ; think that your Superior has greater, and remember that you must obey Superiors, as St. Peter says,

not only when they are good and gentle, but also when they are froward and perverse. Cassian makes mention of a religious, who having received a blow from his abbot in presence of two hundred monks, suffered it with such perfect sweetness and patience that, he not only did not complain, but what is more admirable, he lost nothing of his tranquility and modesty, and did not even change color. St. Gregory praises another monk, named Libertius, who having been struck with a stick by his Superior, and being all bruised in consequence, attributed this, when asked the cause of it, not to the passion of his Superior but to his own fault; and the humility of the disciple, adds this Father, served to teach the master to conquer his passions and to be more meek the next time. It is very rare, however, that anger reaches such a height as in these instances.

I say, farther, that inferiors are often the cause of these emotions and other faults the Superior commits, because God, to punish them for their disobedience, indevotion, want of exactitude in the observance of rule, the little profit drawn from the means of salvation at their command, etc., permits their Superiors to guide them ill. He does not give them light in their doubts nor show them the evils and the remedies. He does not put into their mouths words fit to soothe their pains, fortify them in their temptations, and encourage them to do well; he abandons them to themselves, and then they commit an infinity of faults the pain of which rebounds on themselves. This is the doctrine of St. Gregory who, after having cited these words of Job: *God will make a hypocrite reign* to punish the sins of the people,[1] and those which God says in the Prophet Osee: *I will give you a king in My fury*—adds:[2] "God gives Superiors according as the subjects merits: we often see that those that were very good in subjection become quite otherwise when they are in office," because God gives

[1] Job xxiv. 30. [2] Osee xiii. 2.

Superiors according to the conduct of inferiors. If it be bad, the Superior's manner of governing will resemble it; and the judgment of God upon this point is so terrible that the Superior often commits grave faults, and faults prejudicial to his inferiors, without sin on his part, because God deprives Him of His grace and assistance, not as regards himself, but as regards his subjects. Let no one then complain of having a bad Superior; it is himself that makes him bad, he does not deserve to have a better. He ought not then to complain of him. The faults the Superior commits are the punishment of his own.[1] Such are the words of St. Gregory, whence we ought to conclude that as Superiors can by their virtue, as we have shown, contribute greatly to render their subjects good and virtuous, so subjects also can contribute much to the goodness of Superiors and their success.

SECTION XXV.

OF THE CORRECTION OF FAULTS.

I. All Christians are bound by this precept.—II. Especially Superiors.—III. The Superior ought to be rather meek than severe.

There is yet another advice very important for Superiors; it regards the manner in which they ought to correct their inferiors. We will enlarge a little on this matter.

I. All Christians are obliged by a precept of the old law and the new to admonish the neighbor when they see him fall into some fault, if they can do so profitably. It is an office of charity which they owe him. Many grow old in defects which might be easily corrected, were they taken in time; it is not to love the neighbor to treat him in this manner. If any one were on the brink of a precipice or in some other peril, would it not be considered cruelty if he

[1] Moral. lib. 29. cap. 11.

ing able to succor him, you should look on with folded arms, and see him perish before you? Is it not a greater cruelty not to warn him who is fallen into sin, an evil incomparably greater, and not to extend to him, by a kind admonition, a helping hand to rescue him from this danger? "If you desire to fulfill the duties of charity towards your neighbor," says St. Austin, "you must be convinced that charity is not remiss and timid, that it ought not to be exercised with cowardice and negligence: it is not thus the duties of charity can be fulfilled." Believe not that you love your brother or your servant, if you do not correct him when he falls into some fault. Believe not that you have good-will towards your neighbor if, seeing that he lives licentiously, you do not admonish him and seek to withdraw him from his disorders. Do not call that charity, but negligence and laziness. Your charity must have nerve and sinew, that you may charitably reprehend your neighbor when necessary. If his manners are good, be satisfied with him, if they are bad correct him; love the neighbor, not his vices. The dove which descended on Our Lord at His Baptism is a figure of charity as it is of the Holy Ghost. Why?—because the dove has no gall, but it has a beak and wings to defend its little ones; it strikes without bitterness. Charity can strike, but gently like the dove, not bitterly like the raven.

II. If all Christians are obliged to fulfil this office of charity and correct the faults of the neighbor, Superiors, as the Fathers and theologians teach, are more strictly obliged to it towards their subjects; for they are bound to it not only in virtue of charity, which ought to be more ardent with regard to those for whom they have to answer before God, than those of whom they have no charge; but still more, they are obliged by justice, because God has established them fathers and judges of their inferiors. And though among the virtues necessary for a Superior

we have placed great sweetness, we do not mean a soft and cowardly sweetness, but a strong and courageous sweetness formed on that of God who unites to His most tender and amorous caresses, a power so great that He can bring about what He pleases and never fails in His design. The Superior ought to preserve the just medium between sweetness and gravity, that he may be able to fulfil all the duties of his charge. "All Superiors," says St. Gregory, "ought to observe carefully these two things: they ought to fear, lest keeping discipline too exactly they fail in meekness, and also, lest being too meek they give occasion to some relaxation of discipline. Let zeal for discipline accompany meekness, and let meekness adorn zeal; let these two virtues mutually perfect each other, that zeal may not be too severe or meekness too remiss." The Same Saint, treating elsewhere this subject, says these beautiful words: Mingle sweetness with severity in a just proportion, that too much severity may not ulcerate and anger the hearts of inferiors, and that too great meekness may not tend to relaxation. The good and pious Samaritan applied oil and wine to the wounds of the poor man whom he found half dead on the road to Jericho, that the wine might strengthen the wounded members and the oil mollify the pain. There were kept in the tabernacle with the books of the law, the rod of Aaron and manna, to show that if in the observance of the law and the rules the correction of the rod is used, the sweetness of manna must also be employed. Hence David said: *Thy rod and Thy staff have consoled me;* the rod strikes us, the staff sustains us. If, then, the Superior make the subjects feel the rod, if he be obliged to employ rigor, let him at the same time support them with sweetness that they may not be dejected; and by this means his love will not make them remiss, nor will his severity crush them. We must have zeal, but a zeal which chastises faults with measure, and a meekness which pardons

them with reason.[1] The Lord is sweet and just, says David; hence *He is worthy to give laws*, and to govern those who err; *He will give a law to sinners in the way.*[2]

The Superior is obliged by his charge to maintain order in the house, to banish sin either by preventing it or punishing it; to establish the reign of virtue and the service of God and to conduct his inferior to ever increasing perfection. Religion has confided to him its institute and its rules, that is, its honor and its life, that he may preserve them; it expects this of him. God demands it of him and will call him to a strict account for it. Let him then be vigilant and not spare himself; let him be firm and resolute on this article, and let him fear nothing. He has on his side the Most High, of whom he holds his authority, and who has promised to succor him. Besides, he ought to show himself courageous in an affair of such great importance. Seek not to be made a judge, says the Holy Ghost, unless thou have strength enough to extirpate iniquities; lest thou fear the person of the powerful, and lay a stumbling-block for thy integrity. Be not faint-hearted in thy mind.[3] For if you be pusillanimous you will render your government weak, and expose it to the attacks of the temerarious and the audacious. St. Francis Xavier, instructing Father Gaspard Barzé, whom he left Superior in India, gives him this advice: When you shall have well established your own interior, think of that of your subjects; treat them always rather with meekness and humility than with rigorous gravity, unless indeed any one abuse your lenity, for then it would be necessary to resist the proud that they may see they cannot sin with impunity. This would ruin them; it would be a temptation to others if they saw indocility passed over. Xavier followed on many occasions the advice he here gives, and especially in the case of Father Antony Gomez, Rector of the College

[1] Moral. lib. 20. cap. 8. [2] Ps. 24. 8. [3] Eccles. vii. 6. 9.

of Goa, a man who had received great gifts of nature, but showed very little submission ; whom he sent out of Goa and afterwards out of the Society, though the viceroy and all the nobility interceded for him. But all their efforts and supplications could only obtain of the Saint, that he would send Gomez to Rome to see if he could find before St. Ignatius more mercy than he was willing to accord him.

When sweetness and love are powerless to correct the insubordinate, more severe means must be employed. Superiors, says St. Gregory, should make themselves feared by those whom they see have no fear of God ; that at least the fear they have of man and the chastisements he can inflict, may hinder them from committing faults, since the fear of God and His chastisements do not restrain them. He must urge them, correct them, constrain them, remembering it is for their good ; to have too much condescension for them is to be cruel to others to whom their example is very injurious. Often it happens that one of those indocile spirits in a house, will deprive it of many spiritual and temporal blessings, and draw upon it great misfortunes.

Though all this be true, nevertheless meekness must always exceed severity ; it must float over all other qualities, as oil floats above all other fluids with which it may be mingled. *Mercy exalts itself above judgment*, says St. James. The Lord loveth mercy and justice, says the Psalmist : mercy should always take the precedence ; and if it does not suffice, justice may be brought in as an auxiliary, but always in such a manner that mercy predominates over it ; hence, *the earth is full of the effects of mercy.* The Lord is merciful and just, says the same Prophet, and our God *sheweth mercy* towards us ; he names *mercy* twice and justice only once, to show that God is, not in His nature, but in His works, twice more merciful than He is just, and that His justice is, as St. Ambrose says, considering

these words, "shut up in His mercy as between two ramparts, and cannot come forth to chastise any one without passing through *mercy*, and there softening in some manner the bitterness of the punishment." The Lord is merciful and gracious; patient and plenteous in mercy, says David. The Lord is sweet to all, and *His tender mercies are above all his works*, in magnitude and in number.

The Superior, then, ought always to incline much more to the side of mercy than that of severity, and take more pleasure in pardoning than in punishing, after the example of God, whose image and likeness he is, and in imitation of Our Lord whose mercy and goodness towards sinners were extreme, and who, when clothed with our flesh, chose to exercise the office of Redeemer rather than that of Judge, to pardon sins rather than to punish them. The Superior ought certainly preserve moderation, as we have said; but if he cannot attain a just medium, it is far better that he should incline towards sweetness than towards severity. St. Peter Damian relates of St. Odilon, Abbot of Cluny, that he was extremely severe on himself, but full of sweetness and goodness towards his religious, even when they committed faults. When blamed for this great meekness, he gave very good reasons for his conduct, and added what St. Anselm, St. Francis de Sales and others have said after him, that if he had to be punished, he would rather be punished for being to meek than for being too severe to his brethren.

It is in this spirit of meekness that the Superior ought to reprehend and correct the faults of his subjects, and not with violence or anger. *The just shall reprehend* me of my sins *with mercy; he will accompany his reprimands with meekness;* they will then become more efficacious, says David, *and I will correct myself.*[1] It is the property of the just to make their reprimands in this manner, and not with

[1] Psalms 140, 5

passion. St. Paul, writing to the Galatians, uses on this subject these beautiful words: "My brethren, if any one is overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourselves lest you also be tempted,[1] which is one reason why you should correct him with indulgence. When we wish to correct any one of a fault, says St. Austin, let us remember the weakness which is common to us all, that we may not be spurred on by hatred or blind zeal, but by mercy and charity. St. Thomas, explaining the words of the Apostle, says: "There is nothing which more effectually disarms severity than the consideration of our own weakness and the fear of falling ourselves. Men really led by the Spirit of God will never be too severe, for His Spirit is a spirit of meekness which fills their souls with suavity, according to these words of the Sage: O Lord! how good and sweet is Thy Spirit.[2] St. Paul, says Cajetan, wished to describe good Superiors and show the difference existing between them and others, not by admonishing them to avoid anger in their chastisements, but telling them to correct with charity and sweetness. The same Apostle, instructing his disciple Timothy, says: "Reprehend delinquents, *pray, correct*, rebuke them, not with passion, but *in all patience.*" And because Timothy, being naturally impetuous, failed sometimes, though slightly, in this spirit of meekness, St. Paul in the epistle he wrote to him, adds to the words *grace and peace*, which he used in all the others, the word *mercy*, to teach him, and in his person all pastors, that mercy is the principal and most beautiful ornament of their charge; because they hold the place of God, says Cajetan, whose most amiable and most frequently exercised prerogative is to show mercy and to pardon. St. Basil says that clemency is the second quality of a Superior; not that he is to be silent when faults are committed, but to repre-

[1] Galat. vi. 1. [2] Sap. xii. 1.

hend them with the greatest moderation and charity, and in a manner that will ensure the good effects of the correction. Our Lord promised His Apostles to send them the Holy Ghost, essential and personal love, to reprehend the sins of men. It belongs then to love and not to hatred, to meekness and not to severity, to reprehend and punish faults; this is the true end of the mission of the Holy Spirit, and of the Spirit of Jesus, especially in the new law which is a law of grace and love, and which differs from the old law as love differs from fear, as St. Austin remarks. The old law is a law of fear; the new law a law of love. Thus we see that, whenever Our Lord gave some correction to His disciples, He immediately sought to sweeten the bitterness of it, and to console them. When He reprehended the vain complacency they felt because they wrought miracles, He said that He had seen Satan fall from heaven, that is, shamefully driven from heaven because of his pride; that they might take care lest the same happen to them. He then added that they should be of good courage, for their names were written in the Book of Life in heaven.

SECTION XXVI.

CONTINUATION.

I. The Superiors ought to bear faults with patience.—II. To correct them without anger.—III. With meekness.

Meekness and indulgence then ought to hold the first rank in the virtues necessary to a good Superior, particularly as regards the faults of subjects; and as this is one of the most difficult points of his office, he must labor earnestly to obtain of God the degree of meekness He requires of him. For this three things are necessary: 1, that he endure faults with patience; 2, reprehend them with meekness; 3, correct them with courage.

I. In the first place the Superior must support faults without troubling and disturbing himself; he must accustom himself to view without anger those that are committed, to bear them without chagrin or annoyance, as God and His angels endure them. Those who are of an ardent or bilious disposition, and those who exercise for the first time the office of Superior, often fail on this point; they become excessively sad because of the faults of their inferiors. Father Balthazar Alvarez committed this fault when first he was employed to govern others; but he afterwards saw, by a ray of celestial light, that impatience and want of courage caused this sadness; that he must dilate his heart and nerve it to endure the faults of the neighbor and compassionate them, without demeaning himself. He left in writing a very remarkable thing on this subject, which Father Martin Gutierre, a person eminent in sanctity and learning, had related to him, during the first months of his rectorate in the College of Salamanca. Complaining one day to Our Lord of the faults he saw his subjects commit, he perceived in a plate of silver a very little heart which was filled by two drops of water, and he at the same time heard these words: "Behold thy heart which is drowned in a little water!"—then he saw another heart of immense size, and heard a voice which said:

"Behold the heart of God, which is not saddened by all the idolatries, heresies and other sins with which the world abounds. He waits with invincible patience and longanimity some occasion to turn to Himself those now in sin; remember well, thou must strive to assimilate thy heart to His." This vision changed Father Martin and greatly enlarged his heart; the recital of it to Father Alvarez produced the same effect on the latter. When St. Bernard was first made Abbot, he attempted to measure others by himself; he was very austere to every one, demanding of all the most sublime perfection. When he received a

novice he warned him that he must leave his body outside and bring only his soul into the monastery, which saddened and discouraged many ; but he learned from Our Lord that it was not thus he ought to act. At the same time he received great sweetness and serenity, which ever after inclined him to compassionate the weakness of the feeble, and to lower himself to the capacity of rude and coarse minds. By this means he became quite another man ; he began to provide not only for the spiritual but also for the corporal necessities of his brethren, and used to aid them with extraordinary vigilance and tenderness. He saw that this mode of acting redoubled their joy and fervor, and there arose a species of emulation between the Saint and his subjects—they becoming more exact in the fulfilment of all their obligations, and he growing daily more meek and condescending.

It is thus a Superior ought to act ; he ought to think that he is here below, as in an hospital, where he must see without dismay the sick and the miserable ; that since the horrible degradation of our nature by sin, it is impossible that there should not be many defects and imperfections in the human life ; that the wise man, as Aristotle says, seeks in all things only what can be found in them ; and that as one does not demand of a professor of morals the same demonstrations as one asks of a professor of mathematics, so he ought not to demand of his subjects nor expect of them, that they commit no faults, that their actions be so perfect as to leave nothing to be desired. The Superior ought to be in the house what the bone is in the body, the bone sustains by its strength the flesh, which is naturally weak ; like the Good Shepherd of whom Isaiah speaks, he ought to carry in his arms the delicate lambs and warm them in his bosom ; become as a staff to the weakly, accommodate himself to their feebleness, and act like a father

who leads his little son by the hand, and does not measure his steps by the length of his own limbs but by the shortness of those of his little child, who otherwise could not follow him.

He must consider that all the annoyances and resentments he gives way to cannot cure an evil already committed, nor prevent similar faults from being committed in future; so they are useless, and worse than useless, to the Superior in the first place. They trouble his peace of heart and tranquility of mind by impeding his communications with God, and opposing the irradiations of His light; they are powerless to repair the fault; they usually exaggerate it, for reason cannot judge correctly when it is obscured by passion. Often the impatience a Superior feels on account of the fault of an inferior, is the source of many other faults; it then becomes a species of mental alienation. He forms judgments on bad foundations, and yields to sentiments of contempt and disgust for his subject. Hence the Venerable Father Lefevre said that the thoughts that divide wills, because of faults committed, generally come from the demons, and he cautions the Superior never to yield to them, because by doing so one may lose the good opinion one has of the neighbor, entertain little hope of his amendment, and be remiss in laboring to do what is necessary for his salvation. He adds, that Superiors ought to stifle with care, in their very birth, all suspicions injurious to their subjects; to become in a manner blind to their defects, considering these defects not in themselves, for this view would cool charity, but in God, in His good pleasure, in the Blood of His Son which was shed to remedy them, in the command He has given us to support them, in our own misery, which would draw us into far greater faults if God did not sustain us. When we feel these aversions, this bitterness of heart, this coldness towards any one, we ought to strive to conquer them,

not by flying the person and avoiding all conversation with her, but by treating her kindly, receiving her graciously, conversing frankly with her, after the example of Our Lord, who strove thus to gain the Jews, though he knew they would exercise great cruelty towards Him and condemn Him to a shameful death ; and who after His death shed His Blood even upon him who pierced His Heart with a spear. Finally, the Superior must support patiently and without chagrin the faults of his inferiors, regarding them as signal occasions of practicing patience, sweetness, fortitude, charity, prayer and many other virtues, which God especially sends him, and by which He wills to be glorified.

II. If the Superior acts in this manner, he cannot have much difficulty in reprehending his subjects without anger, and with meekness and patience—a point extremely important, as we have already said, and over which he should watch with the greatest care. Let the Superior never, on any account whatever, reprehend faults with anger, says that man of God, Father Balthasar Alvarez, no matter how justly the reprehensions may be deserved ; let him wait till his mind is in perfect repose. By this means he may afterwards give peace to his brother, and will even gain him by not saying a word while he is moved ; this forbearance will often make the subject enter into himself, and cast himself at the feet of his Superior. That we may act thus, Our Lord enjoins us charity and purity of heart, which are always lost or imperiled by indignation or disgust. God does not will that we correct faults by faults, and avenge his wrongs by committing new ones. St. Francis de Sales excelled in this point ; our age has not seen a sweeter or more amiable Spirit. His historian says : "Sweetness, that virtue so necessary for those who command, shone in him in a most eminent degree, though not to the prejudice of true zeal, as the following instance will

show : While making a visitation of his diocese, a man who seemed under the influence of anger made many complaints to him of a certain priest, and after having said all that his passion could suggest against this priest, he attacked the ecclesiastical state and spoke against it in the most outrageous manner. The good Prelate answered not a single word. One of his assistants, greatly astonished, said : My Lord, you should have given that insolent man a severe reprimand ; I think your office obliged you to do so. The Saint quietly answered : I have made a compact with myself never to speak while I feel the least emotion of anger, as I have felt in this instance ; we will correct him nevertheless, please God. Afterwards sending for this poor man, he spoke to him in such a manner as constrained him to cast himself at his feet and beg pardon for his insolence. Another time a person dear to him besought him to reprove sternly some of his people whose conduct was very censurable. But, replied the Saint, do you wish me to lose in a quarter of an hour the little stock of meekness I have been amassing with so much labor for the last twenty two years ?"

When some found fault with him for his great lenity towards priests who had given him cause of displeasure, he said : " It is better to convert than to punish ; in this diocese, God be praised, it rarely happens that priests commit crimes that merit death or the galleys. Is it not better to treat people in a manner that will cause them to enter into themselves and make a good general confession of their own accord, which will console them and inspire them with firm resolutions of leading a more perfect life in future, than to punish them, and perhaps make them become rather hypocrites than true penitents ?" The same Saint said that the spirit of meekness is the true spirit of God, the spirit of the crucifix ; that to reprehend as we ought, we should use love and sweetness, and that admonitions

seasoned with these, produce the best effects. For the rest, he exercised his zeal in hating, fleeing, hindering and combating all that was contrary to God, that is, to His will, His glory, the magnifying of His Holy Name ; in watching over his flock, and striving that ths souls confided to Him might one day be presented to God by his hands, in all their purity and integrity. His zeal appeared in his extreme ardor, ever constant and laborious, amiable and indefatigable ; while false zeal is turbulent, insolent, fiery, transient, and equally impetuous and inconstant. The wounds of the soul, says Seneca, ought to be treated gently, as well as those of the body. The same author says elsewhere : "There is no animal more delicate than man, none that requires to be more cautiously dealt with, none that ought to be more gently touched. We would think it great folly to get angry with horses or dogs, and yet regard it as trifling to be angry with a man, as if man were of less account than beasts." We tend sickness without feeling annoyed because of it ; well, the maladies and wounds of the mind and heart require the sweetest treatment of a physician who will not be irritated against his patient ; and in healing the wounds of the soul, we must be careful not only to cure them, but to close them up in such a manner that there may be nothing left, calculated to recall the idea of the sufferings that originated them.

When the Superior reprehends, he ought to see that his reprimand is profitable and not hurtful, that it renders the delinquent better and not worse than he was before ; he ought to accompany it with sweetness and reason, not with anger and passion ; it ought to be a fire, but the fire of a lamp which burns by little and little, and in the oil of meekness, otherwise it would annoy the culprit, weaken his courage, and render the yoke of religion hard and painful to him, though Our Lord has declared that His yoke is sweet and His burden light. He would be animated with

a spirit of servile fear towards his Superior, and become apprehensive of seeing him, speaking to him, confiding in him ; instead of the filial fear and sincere affection necessary to enable him to act confidently with him as a child with its parents, and to serve the Lord with joy and gladness. To render correction useful, it must be made to enter the ear sweetly : when a limb is about to be amputated narcotics are given to the patient to deaden the sense of pain, or at least diminish it. Something similar may be done with regard to correction : we may speak a few words of just praise, give some little mark of friendship, descant somewhat on the good qualities of the offender, to dispose his mind to receive the rebuke in good part. In order to be useful, reproof must be administered but seldom ; reprimands given with moderation inspire in the delinquent a salutary fear, which causes him to be more circumspect in future. If reprehension is given too frequently, it irritates the delinquent or renders him more obstinate. St. Anselm so admirable for his meekness and patience, one day heard a certain Abbot complain bitterly of some young Religious, who he affirmed were always bad, and though he admonished, reprehended and chastised them every day, they only became worse and worse. The Saint remarked that he was not at all surprised at the result of such a mode of conduct, and to develop his meaning he made use of the following beautiful comparison : When you plant an arbor, what sort of trees would you have if you surrounded them above and below with thorns? Certainly the branches would be all distended, the trees stunted and capable of producing little or no fruit : with your terrors, your menaces and your daily punishments you act in a similar manner with your young monks who, like young trees, are planted in the garden of religion. It is not therefore astonishing that they are what you describe. If you corrected them with sweetness and moderation, if you gave

them the liberty suitable to the servants of God, they would profit by what you say and bear fruits in abundance. We must dissemble many things in order to correct some usefully ; we must close our eyes to things which it might be useless and even hurtful to notice. There are certain faults which we cannot correct in those with whom we live, says St. Gregory, without becoming culpable ourselves : we therefore evince great prudence and consummate skill in the art of governing, when we appear not to notice them, and support them by a wise and holy dissimulation. There are certain diseases of the body, as internal cancers, which are treated only by palliatives, not used to cure them, because they are incurable, but to prevent their making progress : souls are occasionally attacked by similar maladies and they should receive similar treatment.

III. In fine, correction ought to be full of sweetness, but yet strong enough to be effective, and to root out defects ; it ought not to have the softness of a silken arrow which does not penetrate ; it should be of steel, but this steel must be tempered in charity which, as St. Bernard says, can be piously severe, patiently angry and humbly indignant ; or, as St. Gregory had already said, which burns, but with the fire of love, which is severe but with tranquility ; which punishes, but with chastisements full of mercy. This is what St. Fulgentius practiced well ; for his disciple, who wrote his life, says that he had received of Heaven a special grace to correct faults with admirable patience, so that when he appeared extremely agitated he enjoyed interiorly the greatest calm. He seemed moved when he felt no emotion, says his biographer ; he reproached strongly those who did wrong, but he loved the delinquents, hating only their sins, and he assumed this apparent severity only when it was really necessary for the maintenance of order.

SECTION XXVII.

MODELS OF GOOD GOVERNMENT.

I. St. Ignatius.—II. St. Honoratus.—III. St. Theodosius.—IV. St. Nicetus.—V. God.

We have spoken of the principal virtues essential to those who govern others : it will not be useless to show these virtues reduced to practice in some great and holy personages who excelled in this difficult function, and thus to give Superiors some beautiful models.

I. The first example will be that of St. Ignatius, our holy founder, on whom God bestowed great natural gifts and graces to fulfill well all the duties of this painful ministry. He was exemplary in his whole conduct, prudent in his words and actions, humble in his directions, vigilant in his cares, zealous for religious discipline ; he was very clear-sighted in deliberation of business, mature in his resolutions, prompt and constant in their execution. Always united to God, he recurred to Him in every emergency ; he was grave in conversation, but his gravity was never painful to others because it was accompanied by an admirable sweetness, and his high sanctity, which even irradiated his countenance, rendered him at once venerable and amiable. He was filled with great charity and tender compassion for the sick and weakly, he showed himself sweet and affable to the good and fervent, firm to the tepid who walked carelessly in the ways of God, and terrible to the rebellious. When he required anything to be done, his words were rather an entreaty than a command, as Peter Maffei observes. It was not necessary to watch his humor in order to find a suitable opportunity of conferring with him ; at all times, in sickness as in health, in affection as in prosperity, he received graciously those who came to him, heard patiently and with great marks of def-

erence all they had to say ; if they were in affliction, he consoled them with words full of sweetness and tender compassion. Indeed it may be said that God had bestowed on him, in an eminent degree, all the virtues requisite for a perfect Superior, as is clearly shown by the constitutions he wrote, which are rather pictures of his life than instructions.

II. St. Honoratus first Abbot of Lerins, and afterwards Bishop of Arles, furnishes us with the second model. St. Hilary, his disciple in the monastery and successor in the bishopric, famous for his learning and sanctity, says of him : Honoratus was admirable by the manner in which he conducted those of whom God gave him charge : what disposition so ferocious that he could not sweeten it ?—what mind so rude that he could not polish it ? He rendered meek as doves souls the most irritable and intractable, and inspired them with the sweetness of Jesus Christ ; he chased from hearts, by the sweetness and power of his words, all bitterness, discord and passion. And very few could hold out against his unwearied efforts, accompanied, as they always were, by great sweetness and perfect charity. If, as sometimes happened, he could not gain the most rebellious by his words, he became silent, and going to God to speak of them, he triumphed by his prayers. The troubles of all were his troubles ; he made his own of their gains, their losses, their progress, their virtues, their faults, and all that regarded them ; he rejoiced with those who rejoiced, wept with those who wept ; he was diligent, active, indefatigable to aid, console and encourage—to reprehend one in secret, another in public ; one with sternness, another with caresses ; if he commanded, if he even urged something, it was always with moderation and politeness. This conduct procured him such power over those whom he directed, that it would be difficult to find a man more loved and more feared than he : the love he

inspired engendered a fear of displeasing him, and this fear increased the love. One could hardly imagine the care he took that sadness should be banished the house, and that terrestrial things should not become a subject of temptation to any one in it. He watched continually that one should not be overwhelmed with hard work, and that another should not have too much leisure ; in fine, he knew so well how to discover what was good and bad in all, according to the diversity of their dispositions, that it seemed as if he carried them all in his heart ; and I think that by a certain instinct and a particular light from God, he knew the qualities, the dispositions, and even the physical constitutions and tastes of each, that he might give to each what best suited him ; for he made himself truly the servant of all for the love of Jesus Christ. It was truly a miracle that he, alone, and being nearly always ill, did so many things, transacted so much business, was the first at every exercise, fasted, watched and prayed like the youngest and most robust. He visited the sick though he himself was often sicker than they, prescribed for their bodies as well as their souls, and lest any one should be neglected he used often say : Such a brother has a cold, another does not look well, another has too much work to do, another has been offended by some one, etc. In fine, all his thoughts and all his cares tended towards rendering light to all the yoke of Jesus Christ, imprinting on their hearts the love of this divine Saviour and fraternal charity, inspiring them perpetually with a holy joy and cultivating their souls as his own. Hence his monks made great progress in virtue ; they found their state most agreeable, they esteemed themselves happy in having such a Superior, they called him their father, and in receiving from God such a guide, they judged themselves amply repaid for having quitted their country, their parents, their friends and all the joys of home.

III. The third example is that of St. Theodosius, a native of Cappadocia. This great personage had under his guidance, according to St. Cyril, his historian, six hundred and ninety religious, who loved him as their father, and whom he loved as his children. He governed them with singular prudence, exacted of each only as much labor as he could perform, and seemed to diversify himself according to the capacity and inclination of every one. He never chastised, but corrected by a word firmly spoken and well directed ; thus, in consoling, he did not cease to be feared, and in reprehending he made himself loved. He was sweet and gracious in his discourse, which always turned on things good and holy—he had a wonderful power to incline persons to recollection : he himself was undistracted in the midst of exterior business. His soul was constantly united to God—he passed the nights in prayer, and it was then he obtained of the Divine bounty the graces necessary for his subjects. His heart was full of tender compassion for the sick and the afflicted ; he made himself their physician, their servant, their all—washing them, dressing their wounds, putting on their clothes. He embraced them, cherished them, encouraged them to suffer with patience. He made account of all and despised no one ; he even experienced a particular affection for the most lowly, seeing in them a more lively image of Jesus Christ Our Lord.

IV. St. Nicetus, abbot, furnishes our fourth example. His historian tells us he exercised his office so perfectly that he was regarded as a perfect model of an efficient Superior ; he shone as a sun in the midst of his brethren, and shed around him rays of eminent virtues with which he conducted them to perfection and warmed their hearts. He was meek and amiable, and knew how to render his admonitions salutary and efficacious by the meekness with which he bestowed them. He taught them their duty by

public exhortation ; he animated them to the practice of good works ; he conferred with each in private ; he read in the countenance the dispositions of the heart and the sentiments of the soul. If he saw any one sad, he consoled him, strengthened him, and never quitted him till he had renovated his courage and calmed his emotion. No one ever left him without new joy and strength in God's service ; he attracted all hearts by his humility, his sweetness, his affability, his compassion, his charity, his condescension, and the charms of his holy and amiable conversation.

V. But after having proposed the example of men, let us now propose that of the Creator of men, the noblest of all Superiors—God Himself—on whom all Superiors, who desire to fulfil their office worthily, ought to cast their eyes, considering continually how He governs men, and chiefly those very persons with whose guidance He has entrusted them. The Superior will consider, then, in the government of God the following perfections, that they may serve him as a model—1, God governs all His creatures, and especially those whom He has confided to this Superior, for very sublime and pure ends, and conducts them to these ends by holy means and ways all divine ; 2, He governs them for His glory and their salvation, with admirable wisdom and prudence, with great maturity and without being precipitate in anything ; 3, He executes His designs with great power and constancy, 4, He governs with the greatest equity, never wronging any one ; 5, With most singular meekness and suavity, He hears all without rebuking them, whenever they please and as long as they please. He listens to their cries, gives them all they are, in His designs, destined to receive, accomodates Himself to their nature, weighs their strength, fortifies the weak, consoles the afflicted, relieves their pains, encourages them to do well, praises and recompenses them when they have done well ; for the joys and interior satisfactions God gives men,

whether by Himself or by other means, are but admirable inventions of His love to animate them to live well, to rejoice the way of His commandments, to prove to them that His yoke is sweet and light; 6, He extends His solicitude to all, never forgetting or neglecting any one, even a fly, a leaf, a grain of sand. Thus the Sage says: He reacheth from end to end mightily and disposeth all things sweetly[1] —that is, as St. Bernard explains: He stretches from one end of the universe to the other, from the highest heavens to the depths of the earth, from the most elevated angels to the minutest worms, thinking and providing for all with power and constancy, and yet with meekness and suavity so as to crush nothing; 7, He endures with invincible patience an almost infinite number of outrages against His divine Majesty, without punishing sinners at the moment of their transgressions; 8, He supports sinners; He awaits them with longanimity, giving them time to repent of their crimes, urging them continually to return to Him, aiding them incessantly by His graces and inspirations; if He chastises He chastises as a father, always showing mercy during this life and having always in view their salvation. Finally, amid such a multitude of affairs, of persons to whom He listens and persons to whom He replies, of injuries which He receives, of recompenses and chastisements which He dispenses, He preserves an inviolable peace and tranquility; He is always intimably recollected within Himself and applies to all His interior operations.

All Superiors must study this Sovereign model and strive as much as possible to form themselves on Him. If after having worked hard and performed towards their subjects all the duties of charity, liberality and patience, and done for them all that they ought reasonably to expect, some will be found to murmur, let them remember that there is no government in the world against which there

[1] Sap. viii. 1.

are more complaints than the government of God, which alone is infinitely wise and perfect; the poor wish to be rich, the rich desire to be learned, the sick covet health: there are very few satisfied with their lot, and who if God gave them the choice, would not wish to change their condition. And as God, despite all these murmurs and complaints, fails not to govern all according to the laws of His infinite wisdom, Superiors ought in His spirit to follow His example, without manifesting surprise or losing courage should these disagreeable defects appear occasionally in his subjects.

SECTION XXVIII.

ADVICE TO PREACHERS.

I. A good life. — II. Prayer. — III. Humility. — IV. Zeal and courage. — V. Science.

I. The first counsel for the preacher is, that he ought to *do* before he teaches, and to bear the lamp of truth in the hand as well as in the mouth, that is, that he ought to practice before he preaches. Jesus began *to do and to teach.* He joined example to words, He rested the power of His words on the sanctity of His example, to teach, says St. Bernard, all the preachers in His Church, that they ought to preach to others without neglecting themselves, that they should regard themselves as the first auditors of their sermons, in order to be more faithful to obey them and to hear God speaking in them, than their audience are Our Lord designing to give a lesson in humility and charity to His Apostles, first exemplified His doctrine by washing their feet, and then said to them: You call Me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then being your Lord and Master have washed your feet, *you ought* with greater reason *wash the feet of one another, for I have*

given you an example, that as I have done to you you should do also to one another. The ancient proverb is true : example is more powerful than words ; a thing is more easily taught by works than by discourses. If you desire to learn to the purpose, says Seneca, choose a master in whom you may admire what you see more than what you hear, and whose actions are more praiseworthy than his doctrine. Elsewhere the same philosopher says : O how convincingly and splendidly you will discourse on poverty when you have a poor couch and miserable garments! Your words will then be effective ; you will persuade your auditors to esteem poverty ; you will teach them through their eyes rather than through their ears.

Now, a preacher, cannot imprint on his audience a love of poverty or of any other virtue, if it be not imprinted on himself ; it is impossible for him to give what he does not possess. When a famous preacher of the Franciscan Order was asked why his sermons had not such power to inflame hearts as had those of St. Bernardine, who was less learned and eloquent, he replied : I am like a warm coal which cannot ignite other coals because it is not on fire. Bernardine is like a burning, flaming coal, which inflames all that approaches it. Even masters of profane eloquence teach, that if the orator desire to move his hearers he must be moved himself ; and this is still more true of the preacher, where it is more difficult to produce emotion because he acts on spiritual things, raised above the senses, and which seem contradictory to nature. We must receive before we can give, says St. Denis, for such is the beautiful order universally established in all divine things, that he who distributes them to others must be replenished with the gifts God wishes to communicate by his instrumentality. If the minister be filled with these gifts he can share them with others, but otherwise he cannot do so. Those who are rash enough to attempt to treat divine

things before acquiring a habit of acting divinely themselves, and forming their own lives on the model they propose, are profane men who know not the true spirit of the Church. It ought to be with preachers as with the sun's rays: when a body, whether opaque or transparent, is filled with these, it illumines all around it from the superabundance of its own light. No one should be temerarious enough to guide others in the things of God, if he be not striving in his whole conduct to become like God, and if he be not called to become a master to others by an inspiration and a divine election.

Holy Scripture calls preachers angels, not only because they fulfill the ministry of angels by guiding men in the ways of salvation, but because they must lead an angelic life, and also because they can give only that with which they are filled, as the highest angels communicate to those beneath them only of their own superabundance. To comprehend this let us consider the cherubim and seraphim, and we may judge of the lesser choirs proportionably. "The name of seraph," says St. Denis, "describes the perpetual action of these blessed intelligences occupied incessantly in divine things; this name signifies the ardor, the force and the continual tension of their mind, which is never distracted in its attention, but perseveres constantly and without remissness; this name teaches the force of the attractive power by which these intelligences transform themselves and assimilate to themselves inferior intelligences, by inflaming them with the irresistible fires with which they themselves are consumed. The word cherubim indicates the contemplation of these blessed spirits; the knowledge they have of God, their power and capacity to receive and contemplate the divine light in its first and highest emanation, to be the first forms God gives of His resemblance by an abundant communication of His Wisdom—wisdom which these intelligences shed abundantly

on those below them, and which they communicate freely and without envy." Thus the incarnate angels, the seraphim and cherubim of the Church, that is to say, preachers, being sent and established to conduct men to God, to enlighten them with His knowledge, to inflame them with His love, ought to enlighten them by the lights with which they themselves are illumined, and inflame them with the fires with which they themselves burn ; they ought to give only of their superabundance like fountains, not like canals which flow on without gathering anything for themselves. "If you be wise," says St. Bernard, "be a reservoir and not a canal."

As the ministry of preaching is very high the life of preachers ought to be very virtuous. The Son of God has three nativities : the first is His eternal birth in the bosom of His Father ; the second, His temporal birth on earth ; the third, His birth in the hearts of men. God the Father is the principle of the first ; the Holy Virgin is the source of the second ; preachers are the principle of the third, because they ought to produce Jesus Christ in their hearts. Hence St. Paul, the most sublime of all preachers, says : My little children, of whom I am again in labor, and for whose sake I work with so much pain, *that Christ may be* formed *in you.*[1] Let preachers consider the excellence and sanctity of the sources of the first two births of Jesus Christ ; God whose excellence is infinite, the Holy Virgin whose excellence surpasses all our words and all our thoughts ; and they will see how holy they should be in thought, word and work, if they wish to render themselves worthy of becoming the principle of the third birth of Jesus Christ.

It is for want of holiness of life that sermons produce such little fruit ; that so few preachers touch hearts power-

[1] Gal. iv. 19.

fully, change wills, root out vice, and incline souls to virtue. It is not the fault of the doctrine; that is the same as ever; it is not for want of capacity, but for dearth of sanctity. Thus St. Teresa was accustomed to say that one preacher of high virtue produced more fruit than many of less virtue. And her confessor, Father B. Alvarez, said in the same idea, that one stroke of a well-defined stamp would make more impression than many strokes of another. "One preacher replenished with God," said Blessed Mary of the Incarnation, "does more than a hundred others, and a few men animated with the apostolic spirit would be capable of converting the world, and inflaming it with the love of God, as the Apostles did in olden times."

Speaking of the Apostles, St. Chrysostom uses these remarkable words: "If twelve men, so destitute of the gifts of nature, have attracted to Christ nearly all the universe, consider, I pray you, how profound is our malice, how great our sloth since, being so numerous, we cannot bring to this divine Saviour the little remnant, when we ought to suffice to convert a thousand worlds. Yes, you say, but they were Apostles. Well, what matter: were they angels? —were they not the same nature with us? Did they descend from heaven? No, you reply, but they had the gift of miracles, which made them work wonders. I answer, that we cannot cover our cowardice with the purple mantle of miracles; many have wrought them and yet did not operate nearly as much good as the Apostles, because the sanctity of their life did not correspond to the force of their power. What then enabled the Apostles to operate so wonderful a change among men? The sanctity of their lives, the victory they gained over their passions, their contempt of riches and honors. If they had, like us, followed their appetites, though they had resuscitated the dead, not only had they produced no fruit, but they would be regarded as impostors. We see this clearly by the ex-

ample of St. John Baptist, who wrought no miracle, as the Scripture remarks, and who yet by the force of his extraordinary sanctity, attracted to him all Judea, and operated admirable conversions. So true is it that it is sanctity which gives power, and which replenishes men with grace for themselves and for others." I conclude by saying that the preacher ought always bear in mind what happened to Origen who, not being able to endure the confusion he experienced in Antioch because of his deplorable fall, went to Jerusalem, where the Priests presented him the holy Scriptures, beseeching him to explain some passage of them to the people. He opened the book at these words of David: *God said to the sinner: How hast thou dared to speak of My laws*[1] after having violated them, and to profane My mysteries with thy impure mouth? These words deeply penetrated his heart; he saw that they were addressed to himself, and he closed the book and began to weep. If this prohibition were listened to, many would, I fear, be obliged to close the book and the mouth, and to open their eyes to tears.

II. The preacher ought to be given to prayer, because it is in prayer and at the foot of the crucifix, as much as in books, that he will learn the truths he must announce: it is there he ought to consider them, to penetrate them, to taste them. The active life, says the Angelic Doctor, of which preaching is one of the noblest parts, supposes a great habit of contemplation; for the preacher ought to declare only the things he shall have attentively meditated, and the things on which he shall have been enlightened in prayer. Preaching ought to flow from the plenitude of contemplation as from its source: hence the Royal Prophet said, according to the interpretation of St. Gregory, that perfect men coming forth from prayer and communion with God, will spread the sweetness of His goodness, and

[1] Ps. 49. 16.

publish aloud His wonders. Our Lord, before announcing His Gospel to men, retired to the desert for forty days and devoted Himself to contemplation, to reflect, as it were, and to meditate on what He had to say. When the preacher acts thus, his sermons are powerful and produce fruit, because they are watered by the unction of devotion and animated by the spirit of grace ; his words are rays emanating from the Sun which enlightens him interiorly, and sparks which escape from the fire with which his heart is inflamed. St. Thomas remarks, that we may judge of a thing in two ways : either because we know it in its nature by our own experience, or because we know it by speculation and from books. The first manner is incomparably more perfect and secure than the second, for a chaste man knows the excellence and pleasures of chastity far better than an unchaste moralist. On this Aristotle has grounded the principle, that the virtuous man is the rule and measure of human actions : just as with reference to pain, we judge much better of the illness and inquietude fever causes when we are attacked with it, than we should from all the discourses of physicians. So when the preacher shall have ruminated and tasted in prayer, spiritual and divine things, he will afterwards speak of them with more force ; he will represent them with more lively colors ; he will inflame hearts more powerfully than if he had only the dry knowledge gained by simple reading.

Moreover, the preacher ought always to ask of God the thoughts, affections and words most proper to touch his auditors, and he ought earnestly to recommend to Him the success of his sermons. It would be good to offer the Mass he should celebrate that day for the same intention ; because whatever natural capacity he may have, whatever preparation he may make, however good the intention that animates his works, if the Holy Ghost do not teach interiorly, as St. Gregory says, and speak to the ear of the

heart, in vain will his voice reach the ear of the body. It must be remarked that a preacher, by his natural talent, and the knowledge he has acquired by study, can teach aptly the mysteries of faith—please, make himself admired etc. ; but he cannot excite sorrow for sin, root out evil habits, destroy vice ; he cannot inspire sentiments of humility, charity—put his audience in the way of salvation, which is nevertheless the true end of his ministry, because these effects, being supernatural, must flow from a supernatural cause, and from a power greater than that of the preacher, which is, the grace of the Holy Ghost, to be asked and obtained only of Our Lord. Father Benedict Palmio of our Society, one of the greatest preachers of his time, never ascended the pulpit without having first spent some hours in prayer, begging the success of his sermon with such ardor that he often bedewed the floor on which he knelt with his tears ; and he wept not only there, but even in the pulpit, and sometimes interrupted his discourse thus for a quarter of an hour together. Preachers should ask of Our Lord the success of their sermons and conjure Him to shower His benedictions on their discourses, *to give them words full of strength*—sound, clear doctrine, proportioned to the capacity of their hearers, pressing and conclusive reasons, proper terms, a moving enunciation and voice, pious and attractive gestures : they should finally beseech Him to become a torch in their hearts, a sun in their mind, and the word of their mouth.

St. Austin, speaking of this in the fourth book of the Christian Doctrine—which preachers would do well to read often—says these remarkable words : The preacher ought to enunciate just, holy and good things, without mingling any others with them, to give them forth clearly in an instructive, suitable and pleasing manner, with force and persuasive energy. Let him be convinced that this force is more the fruit of prayer than the result of natural

talent; to obtain it he must, before preaching, pray for himself and for his hearers. While in the pulpit, before opening his mouth to address men, he should lift up to God a heart full of burning thirst that he may give to them of the superabundance he shall have received; for as in the ministry of preaching there are numerous subjects to be treated and numerous manners of treating them, who but He who sees the hearts of all can know what is best for the preacher to say and the people to hear? Who can inspire us to preach what we ought, and as we ought, if not He who can dispose as He pleases of us and of our words? Let the preacher, then, strive to learn what he ought to announce, and how he can best announce it, but when he is about to preach let him remember this admonition of Our Lord: When you appear before the great ones of this earth, think not how you shall answer them, for it is not you who speak, *but the spirit of your Father who speaketh in you.* If, concludes this holy Doctor, if the divine Spirit speaks by the mouth of those who are persecuted for the love of Jesus Christ, why should He not also speak by the mouth of such as announce Jesus Christ to those who desire to follow Him?

For the rest, let not the apostolic man think that the exercises of charity, preachings, confessions, etc., injure prayer; let him think what is really true, that these exercises are great helps to it; prayer and action mutually assist each other. Father Peter Faber said that the word of Our Lord and experience show us, that those who are merciful towards the neighbor feel most abundantly the effects of the goodness and mercy of God, even without asking them; and he added, that those who fail to assist their neighbor are often deprived of lights and consolations in prayer on that account, while those who apply most to works of mercy are those whom God most frequently inebriates with these consolations. *The soul with-*

out mercy, says the Prophet Osee,[1] is deprived of the sweetness of God and of the milk of His bosom. St. Francis Xavier, after having labored all day for the salvation of Christians and infidels, passed the night in prayer, and experienced therein such profound delights and consolations that he was constrained to exclaim, "Enough, O Lord, enough!" Who will say that he would have received the same consolations had he remained in his chamber? To have milk, one must first be a mother.

III. The preacher ought to be replenished with profound humility, and be persuaded that this virtue is particularly necessary to him, as much to refer faithfully to God all the glory of his labors, as not to lose his soul in the midst of the praises he may receive or the disgrace and reverses that may happen to him. It is also essential that he give to his auditors the example of this fundamental virtue of Christianity, in order to be able to penetrate their hearts, operate in them salutary effects, and render his ministry fruitful. Humility greatly enhances all the actions of the humble man, and gives immense weight to his words; while, on the contrary, vanity lowers and renders contemptible all persons, but especially preachers. History relates that an ancient Father of the desert saw one day a troop of angels descend from heaven, carrying a book written within and without, and he heard them asking one another: "To whom shall we give this book?—whom shall we select to announce the mysteries it contains?" One said one person, another mentioned some one else, and they named the most virtuous and skillful men of the time; finally all agreed to give it to St. Ephrem, saying: "Verily, all who have been proposed are holy, yet the book we will give only to Ephrem, the meek and humble of heart; he will receive with it a rare talent for preaching: behold what his humility procures him." St. Vincent

[1] Osee i. 8.

Ferrer, residing at court in quality of confessor to His Holiness Pope Benedict XI., was attacked with a violent fever : after suffering greatly for twelve days Our Lord appeared to him, accompanied, by St. Dominic and St. Francis and surrounded by a multitude of angels, and told him to be of good courage, that his health would be restored to him, but that he must quit the court because He had chosen him to announce the Gospel in France and Spain, in humility and poverty. He obeyed, and by his sermons, full of fire—fortified by the example he gave of these two virtues—he converted more than one hundred thousand bad Catholics, twenty thousand Jews and eight thousand Saracens. Our Lord Himself, previous to His public life, humbled Himself before His precursor from whose hand he received baptism, to teach us, says St. Gregory Nazianzen, that purity of soul and humility ought to precede preaching, and prepare the way for its success. In the midst of His preaching Our Lord said, according to the interpretation of St. Gregory the Great : Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart. My humility ought to excite you to give credence to My words.

St. Francis Xavier, instructing the preachers of our Society, recommends them above all things to be very humble, to have a low opinion of themselves, to exhibit humility in their countenance, in their gestures, in their discourse, and in their whole conduct. Behold what he wrote to Father Bernard Barzé, a truly apostolic preacher, whose sermons did wonders : "To acquire the humility necessary for your functions, you must refer to God, as to its true source, all the good you do ; for it is He who gives you the grace to preach and to the people the grace to listen to you. Remember you have received this gift, not so much because of your merit, as through the intercession of the Society, which begs by fervent prayers these graces for all her members. Remember, too, that every-

thing good and true which you say comes not from you, but from God, who speaks by your mouth. Make good use of the talent God has given you and of which He will exact a severe account ; attribute to yourself only your sins, laziness, pride, and ingratitude towards God and towards the Society, which procures you all the good you possess ; never forget that many great preachers, once more eloquent and useful than you, now burn in eternal flames. Having opened the gate of heaven to many souls, they closed it miserably against themselves ; they received hell for their portion because they allowed themselves to be inebriated with vanity and self-esteem ; vanity blinded them, unsettled their reason and made them arrogate to themselves the glory due to God alone. Hence watch over yourself, and beware lest the splendors of your success in this ministry cause you to despise one of your brothers because you imagine you do more than he ; think rather that their prayers impetrate for you these graces and favors, and that thus you are more indebted to them than they to you. I desire, moreover, by the love I bear you, that you would often reflect attentively, that the good things God designs to accomplish by your instrumentality are retarded by your sloth ; I prefer for your profit that you would fix your eyes rather on the faults of which you are culpable than on the part you think you have taken in advancing the glory of God ; because the former will inspire confusion and humility, discovering to you the effects of your weakness and misery ; while the latter would only nourish your self-love, inflate your heart, and persuade you that you had performed these good works of which God is the first principle and the true author." Such are the wise admonitions which this great Saint gave to this famous preacher.

Among these counsels, St. Francis Xavier touches on a point very proper to keep preachers in humility, namely,

that they are indebted for the fruits they operate to the prayers of others. We see that what is most useful in an edifice is not the cut stone which receives so much admiration, nor the cupids, the cariatides, and other ornaments which appear to bear up the whole mass of the building and bend under the weight of the burden, though in reality they do not support any part of it, but the stones on which they are sculptured. The foundation without which it could not stand, is hidden in the bosom of the earth, and never spoken of. Each order in the Church is a spiritual edifice, of which the principal and fundamental parts are not always those most seen by men, either because they hold offices, teach the higher sciences, preach or fulfil some other brilliant function, though the Order seems to be sustained by them and indebted to them for its preservation and glory. The most holy and virtuous are the real foundation and true lustre of an Order : a simple brother employed in some abject duty, a young regent teaching the lowest class, but humble, submissive, patient and charitable, given to prayer, an exact observer of rule, may, by his virtue and sanctity, sustain the house, because in consideration of him, God showers spiritual and temporal blessings on the whole Order and gives to his brothers the grace to exercise worthily the holy ministry. The branches of an Order bear and nourish the fruits with which they are charged, only because of the value communicated to them by the root which is hidden in the earth ; the happy success of religious houses ought not to be referred to excellent preachers, wise subjects, persons of great natural talents but destitute of virtues before God. The branches which bear the fruit must not glorify themselves ; the root which supplies them with sap does more than they, since it nourishes them. Do not glorify yourselves, says St. Paul, it is not you who bear the root, but it is the root which bears you. St. Francis knew this perfectly well by

the heavenly lights he received; hence he said that in a house, and even in what regarded the salvation of souls, greater account should be made of a lay brother who is deaf and dumb, but a good religious, and who excites others to virtue by his example, than of a learned and eloquent preacher who is not equally virtuous. He quotes in proof of this these words of Anna, the mother of Samuel: "She who was barren has borne many children, and she who had sons is become weak;" and says that a poor brother who is not by his office employed in bringing forth spiritual children and who seems sterile, will nevertheless see on the day of judgment, that by his prayers and good works done in secret, he has brought forth many children whose beatitude shall be attributed to him, and become the title of his recompense; while the famous preacher who has always a numerous auditory and who thinks he has gained many souls to God, will then see that it is not he who has gained them, and that, because of his vanity or the oblique intentions which mingled with his good intentions, instead of the praise and rewards he expects, he shall receive blame and punishment. Though the eyes and the tongue fulfil splendid and honorable offices in the human body, yet they are not its noblest parts; the noblest are the brain and the heart which aid and direct the other members in the fulfilment of their functions: so, the chief and noblest parts of a religious body are not, absolutely speaking, those who govern or those who direct, but those who have most love for God, and who by their virtues obtain for the other members from the divine bounty, grace to fulfil their functions worthily.

IV. The preacher should possess great zeal and courage not only to support the labors of his ministry, which are very great, but also to endure the divers disgraces that accompany his functions, to preach in all places and to all sorts of persons, to publish the truth freely, to reprehend

vice fearlessly but not rashly, and to suffer all the other pains necessary to operate the salvation of souls. Our Lord chose His Apostles mostly from the natives of Galilee, because, as Josephus remarks, the Galileans were naturally courageous and fearless. It must be acknowledged that preaching is a laborious function, and that he who desires to acquit himself worthily of it will have much to suffer : if he succeeds, he will be liable to vanity, if he do not succeed, he may feel disgust and discouragement ; if he see before him a numerous auditory he will have reason to rejoice because he sees the word of God loved, honored and esteemed, and thus many learn to know and love Him, and because of the advantage which will accrue to the neighbor in hearing the Word of God ; for if he be sick he will thereby find a remedy for his maladies ; if he be a sinner he will conceive the design of changing his life ; if he be just he will feel within him the desire of becoming more just, also, on his own account, because he sees his preaching is useful to many, yet if he see before him only a small audience he ought not to lose courage, but to preach and preach with zeal, remembering that his recompense will be the same in preaching to many or few, provided he does all in his power, because this is all he is obliged to, and God demands nothing more of him. It belongs to God to inspire men with a desire of hearing his Word ; the preacher is only obliged to announce it. The public crier who proclaims an order of the magistrate does not grieve if only a few come to listen to him, his duty being to signify this ordinance, the duty of the people to hear it ; if any one violate this proclamation he will be punished, if he know it not his ignorance will not save him, since he might have learned it had he listened when it was proclaimed.

The preacher ought, moreover, to consider that he renders to God and to the Church a great service, preaching

even to a few. A large city is proud of its fountains, which play day and night, though no one may come to draw water ; even so, it appertains to the greatness and majesty of the Church to have public fountains, that is, holy preachers who give out day and night the waters of divine wisdom, though few persons may come to drink of them. The man who when asked why he applied so closely to his art, which could only be useful to few, answered wisely, as Seneca remarks, when he said : It suffices that it be useful to a few, even to one, and though it were useful to no one, I should still be content. One man is to me the whole human race, said Democritus. And certainly, if Our Lord catechized with so much affection the Samaritan woman alone ; if He did as much for each singly as for all in general ; if the angel guardians, intelligences so excellent and so perfect, pass so many years in instructing a single soul, the preacher ought not be sad or discouraged though he should address only six persons. St. Bonaventure says of St. Francis, that he spoke with equal courage to great and small, with as much joy to a small audience as to a large one. Elcana seeing Anna, his wife, weeping because she had no children, said to her: *Why weepest thou? Am I not more to thee than ten children?* The will of God, which sends to a preacher few persons or many, ought to be dearer to him than the conversion of the whole world.

V. The teaching of the preacher ought to be good, sound, intelligible and proper to enlighten the understanding, inflame the will and excite to virtue ; he ought to draw upon the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers, rarely quoting profane authors. He must not weary himself in composing an elaborate discourse too highly charged with ornament ; he ought to use ornaments if he can, but as a lady of honor, not as an abandoned woman, who is frizzed out, overloaded with tawdry finery, and adorned in a lascivious manner. Such ornaments please not the wise, says St.

Prosper, these magnificent and pompous words please not the prudent, but strong and solid discourse. St. Austin, his master, says : "The mark of sound sense is to seek in words, not words but truth : of what service is a golden key if it will not open ? what we expect of a key is, that it will open what is shut." Seneca, a pagan, had already said these remarkable words : I do not wish, my dear Lucilius, that you should be too nice about your words and the textures of your discourse ; there are more important things to be attended to : when a man speaks only in a highly polished manner you may believe that he cannot elevate himself to very high things but rests in little ones. One possessed of an intellect truly great will speak with less nicety but more firmness ; all he says is more eloquent of power than of study. From young men entirely devoted to dress and gallantry nothing solid is ever expected. The discourse is the face of the soul : if it be painted, elaborate, full of art and artifice, be sure that the soul is not sincere, and that it has little strength. Nicety is not the greatest ornament of man.

All this gentility seems to me far from the designs of God and the spirit of His Crucified Son. Many reproach us, says St. Ambrose, because our authors have not always spoken according to the rules of rhetoric ; we do not deny it, for they have spoken not according to art but according to grace, which far surpasses all the power of art. The preaching of the Gospel needs not pompous or affected language, lest its victories be attributed to human skill, and not to truth. And the greatest of preachers writing to the Corinthians says : Christ hath sent me not to baptize but to preach the Gospel, *not in loftiness of speech* like the orators, lest the Cross of Christ be *made void*,[1] but in a simple familiar style, in order that the change of my hearers be not attributed to my eloquence, but to the

[1] Cor. ii. 1.

Cross, whose glory would otherwise be tarnished. After having fulfilled his mission, the Apostle adds: And I, brethren, when I came among you I came not with the *persuasive words of human wisdom.* I have not employed the ornaments of rhetoric nor the reasonings of philosophy, for I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified; I have not used, in preaching to you, *the persuasive* discourses of human wisdom, but the sensible effects of Spirit and the power of God, that no one may say you have been convinced by my word, but that all may clearly see *that your faith is not grounded on the wisdom of men* but on the power of God.[1]

Since Jesus crucified is the end of all the sermons of preachers and the chief object of their mission; since He shows in the exterior only poverty, abasement and pain, retaining within, glory, riches, and divinity, it is reasonable that discourses treating of Him should have a certain indifference with reference to exterior and worldly beauty, yet be filled interiorly with the power of Christ crucified and the spirit of God: this is also the means of making them fruitful. God hath made us fit ministers of the new testament, says St. Paul, not in the letter but in the Spirit. The unpolished language of the Apostles, and the solecisms of preachers have, as St. Theodoret observes, rendered vain the eloquence of the orators, and overthrown the arguments of the philosophers. St. Francis having to preach one day in presence of the Pope, cardinals and other distinguished persons, prepared with much study the sermon he intended to make. When the moment was come to preach it, his memory failed him to such a degree that he could not recall a single word; he frankly and humbly confessed to this august assembly his misfortune, and having interiorly invoked the aid of the Holy Spirit he spoke to them with such unction and fluency, excited them to

[1] Cor. iii. 6.

compunction with such urgent and forcible arguments, that it was easy to see that it was not a man who spoke, but God who spoke by his mouth.

Yet I would not be understood to say that a preacher ought not to prepare carefully all his discourses ; that he ought not use the ornaments of science, if, as St. Austin says, he encounter them on the way, but he must not go too far to seek them. He may employ them if they present themselves and if they be necessary appendages of the matter of his discourse ; just as a valiant soldier, eager for the combat, seizes a sword whose hilt sparkles with gold and diamonds, not because it is a precious sword, but because it is a sword. Whatever natural or acquired talent one may have for preaching, he must be chiefly solicitous to animate himself with the Spirit of God, a pure intention, an ardent zeal for the salvation of souls, because these are what produce fruit, and not finely rounded periods, beautiful language, delicately spun phrases which pass not beyond the ears of the auditory. It is only when sermons are animated by the Spirit of God that they go to the heart, for the letter killeth but *the spirit giveth life.* It is not the ornaments of a sword that wound, but the blade. Alas, how often are we deceived in our judgment of preachers ; it is a very different thing to be a good preacher before God and a good preacher before men : before men he who says splendid and excellent things in the most polite and graceful manner, acquires reputation ; but in the estimation of God, he alone who preaches according to His will, when, where and how He wills—who preaches in His Spirit and for His designs, who seeks not to make himself admired but to draw souls to virtue and produce fruit. It often happens that the greatest and most famous preachers are not those who produce most fruit ; some who have less natural talent but more zeal and upright intentions, are far more successful in winning souls to God. The

highest trees are not always the most fruitful ; their elevation makes them more conspicuous, and exposes them to greater danger from storm and rain, while apple trees, plum and fig trees are less elevated but more useful. We may, then, lawfully conclude that the best preachers are those who best fulfill the end of preaching, which is to save souls. The most adroit and perfect archer is not he who has the most beautiful arrows, but he whose aim is surest. To produce fruit, one should preach a sure, right and mild doctrine, leaving obscure subtleties and doubtful things to the schools. The teachings should be proportioned to the capacity of the audience. Of this Our Lord has given us example. Being the Incarnate Wisdom of the Father, He could say very sublime things, and yet He abased Himself to use the most ordinary comparisons in His parables and familiar discourses. And all preachers remarking that if, in every congregation, we subtract a hundred people or less, the remainder will be composed of women and unlettered persons, or persons who have but a small tincture of letters ; consequently the greater part of the audience cannot appreciate the beauty of exquisitely rounded periods, nor experience pleasure and profit from them, and it would not be at all suitable to deprive the majority of the food proper to it for sake of satisfying a small number of the literati who want to be inflamed rather than enlightened. It is necessary to preach a doctrine useful to all, strong, powerful and persuasive, capable of imprinting a horror of vice, love of virtue, fear of hell, desire of heaven, and, above all, a sincere love of God and our neighbor, since that is the end of the law.

The preacher will find these truths developed in the lives and writings of the Saints, and chiefly in the Holy Scripture, which we recommend sufficiently when we say that it is the Book of God ; for if we judge books by the

genius and learning of their authors, what esteem ought we not to have for the Holy Bible, the work not of men or of angels, but of Wisdom itself, which makes me confidently assert that a single chapter of this divine book is more useful, and contains more wonders, if we be clear-sighted enough to discover them, than all the books that ever have been or ever will be written by men. Every syllable, says St. Chrysostom, contains a hidden treasure. Hence the Holy Scripture has been compared to an inexhaustible mine of gold, to perfumes which embalm those who touch them ; St. Basil compares it to a pharmacy in which are found remedies for all diseases. St. Paul thus instructs his disciple Timothy :[1] "All Scripture divinely inspired, is profitable tot each, to correct, to conduct to piety and justice, that the man of God may be perfect and instructed in all good. The preacher ought to be greatly devoted to this reading, and have continually in his hands this sacred volume. Alphonso, King of Arragon, in the midst of the multitude of business that pressed on him, read the Old and New Testament fourteen times with the greatest attention. What an example for the preacher who is far more strictly bound to this study than was this prince? But alas, the Bible is sometimes the book least studied. There are many who read profane books, said Our Lord to St. Angela Foligno, but few who study My holy Scripture. Many preachers amuse themselves in culling from pagan authors whose doctrine cannot be otherwise than dry and profane, while they neglect the study of the Sacred Writings which furnish the divine doctrine they are bound to announce. This is what God complained of in Jeremiah, saying: They have abandoned Me, the source of *living waters*, and of all sciences, and have made to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns which *cannot contain water*, in which is found only a dry and insipid doctrine.

[1] Tim. iii. 16.

If the preacher would usefully exercise his ministry, he must carefully study the Holy Scripture, take from it what he will say, draw from it well-chosen texts, which he must carefully meditate and develope, then he may promise himself success, by the grace of God. His words will not be lost, but they will make impression on his hearers and powerfully excite them to virtue, for he may reasonably believe that God will bless His own words and give them more force than the words of another. But as the Scriptures present difficulties, the preacher ought to study their sense in the best interpreters, and particularly in the Holy Fathers, who being more holy are nearer to the Author of this divine Word, and have received from Him more lights to comprehend it. He will learn, too, from their example, that the great key of the Holy Scripture and the surest means to discover the sense of it, are a good life and purity of soul. Theophylacte remarks that in the first ages, before the law was given by the ministry of Moses—when innocence was greatest—men did not learn in books what they were obliged to do, but immediately from God, who, because of the purity of their hearts, spoke interiorly to them, with great familiarity, and manifested to them His will. He spoke thus to Noah, Abraham, Job, etc. But since men have given themselves up to sin, and thus rendered themselves more unworthy that God should speak to them directly—His goodness not wishing to abandon them entirely—He has given them the Holy Scriptures wherein to learn their duty, and what He demands of them. Whence it is easy to conclude, that since purity of heart rendered the first men worthy of the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and merited for them the favor of hearing the voice of God Himself, the same purity will also render us more worthy of being enlightened, of hearing Him speak in the Holy Scripture, and of comprehending the sense of His divine words. Cassian relates that the celebrated

Abbot Theodore acquired a great knowledge of the Scriptures not so much by reading and erudition as by purity of heart, and having been asked how he could attain so profound an acquaintance with them, he replied that whoever wishes to penetrate the Scriptures must apply less to the study of commentaries than to the acquisition of purity of heart ; for the eyes being freed from the veils of passion, will see, as it were, naturally, the beauties and the wonders of this divine book ; the Holy Ghost burns to make us acquainted with them, but our vices like clouds obstruct our view. Blessed Giles, the companion of St. Francis, said one day, speaking of himself, that he knew a man who received great lights on every verse of the psalmody he chanted.

The Angelic Doctor affirmed that he had acquired more knowledge of the Holy Scripture by prayer than by study. St. Bernard confesssed that his admirable facility for understanding the Holy Scripture, relishing and applying it, was chiefly the fruit of meditation and prayer. Hence, writing to a learned man, he says : " Believe me, I speak from experience, you will learn more in prayer than in books ; solitude will be for you a better master than men." The crucifix was the great book of St. Bonaventure ; charity, that of St. Dominic. Of course, inanimate books are good and necessary, but the book of books, the living book, is God residing within us in quality of master to instruct us, of sun to enlighten us, if only we allow Him. The preacher ought to retire within himself, study this book, consult this teacher, expose himself to the rays of this divine Sun, then will the abundance of these celestial lights, and the treasures of this infinite wisdom, impart to him all he shall require to instruct men profitably, and to fulfil well all the functions of his sublime ministry.

SECTION XXIX.

ADVICE TO CONFESSORS.

I. Excellence of this ministry.—II. Its merit.—III. The confessor ought to esteem and love it —IV. What the confessor ought to do before, during, and after the confession.—V. Counsel of Father Alvarez.

I. In order that the confessor may appreciate this ministry, he must attentively consider its excellence. One cannot conceive a greater, since it opens the gates of heaven, closes those of hell, frees man from the captivity of the demon, renders him a child of God, delivers him from sin, the greatest of all evils which transforms him into God's enemy and degrades him beneath all creatures; that it confers grace, a supernatural quality, a ray of the Divinity which renders the soul beautiful beyond all expression and most pleasing to God, which embellishes all the faculties of the soul with all the precious treasures of charity, with infused virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost, and elevates him above all that is great and noble in nature, and, in a word, which justifies him. This justification of man is a work so admirable and so sublime, that after the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in which the Body and Blood of Christ are consecrated, nothing greater is operated on earth, nothing is more glorious to God, more honorable to Our Lord, more pleasing to the angels, more beautifying to the universe.

The confessor ought to consider attentively the extraordinary utility of his ministry and the inestimable treasures of merits he acquires in fulfilling a function so holy and divine, so full of interest to God and man, in which he fulfils more perfectly and efficaciously than in any other, the spiritual works of mercy. When he hears confessions he instructs the ignorant, he counsels the doubtful, he consoles the afflicted, he admonishes sinners, undergoes

for them great fatigues, and prays God to have mercy on them. As regards the corporal works of mercy, he fulfils them excellently in spirit, for he cures the sick, gives the Bread of Life to hungry souls, the celestial liquor of holy doctrine to those who are thirsty, clothes with the robe of grace those who were divested of it; snatches captives from the tyranny of the demon, and breaks the chains of sin which bound them. He harbors pilgrims by sheltering their souls in his heart and affection, and zealously guarding them; he makes them die to the world to bury themselves in Christ. Now, if mercy and all divine blessings are promised to those who exercise mercy towards men, what mercy shall not a confessor merit—what treasures shall he not gather, since he exercises mercy so perfectly every time he hears a confession! If a preacher touches the hearts of three or four of his audience, and inspires them with a firm resolution to quit their evil courses, we think, and reasonably too, that he has done much; but does not the confessor do more when, in a few hours, he justifies many sinners, cleanses their souls from sin, restores to them their pristine purity, puts them in the path of salvation, snatches them from hell, and renders them worthy of heaven? Moreover, all these wonders are operated in secret, without noise, without danger of vanity; while the preacher runs great risks because of the notice his functions attract. Hence many holy and great personages, knowing the excellence and precious advantage of this ministry, have applied to it with unceasing ardor and consumed in it the greater part of their lives. Brother Anthony of Segovia, a saintly Religious of the Order of St. Francis and a famous preacher, said that if God did him the favor of taking him to heaven, he would be well satisfied to have one foot on the earth that he might hear confessions. What immense good St. Philip Neri accomplished in Rome by this means! He converted sinners

he sustained a great many persons in the practice of virtue, and conducted souls not a few to very high sanctity.

III. Convinced by all these reasons, the confessor must highly esteem and love this holy and divine ministry, remembering that after the celebration of Mass he cannot employ his time in anything so sublime and useful as hearing confessions, functions which make him a sharer in the divine prerogatives and infinite dignity of Jesus Christ, whose office it is to forgive sins and save souls. But as excellent things are always accompanied by great difficulties, the confessor must resolve to surmount those he meets in the exercise of this function that he may fulfil it perfectly. He should be endowed with the knowledge necessary to discern sins and their remedies, and possess great purity of heart that he may administer this sacrament without rendering himself culpable. Hence Our Lord said to His Apostles : Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven. He had previously said : Receive ye the Holy Ghost. The confessor must also be prudent and know how to diversify his treatment according to the disposition and necessity of persons ; and as there are stupid penitents who comprehend not what is said to them, others so mysterious that they only open themselves by halves, others who deny or excuse their faults, others so scrupulous that they are never content, others importunate by their continual repetitions—who by their superfluous words waste time ; others melancholy, who feed on dark and bitter thoughts, and are, as it were, plunged in constant despair ; others bold and rash, who dispute with their confessor ; others hardened, who give no sign of sorrow—the confessor must be endowed with great patience to bear these defects without emotion or disgust, to hear all these persons with tranquility, to speak to them with sweetness, to aid them with charity. He must strive to show them the grievousness of sin, to imprint on them a salutary

confusion and a sincere regret, by some of the reasons we have given in the Second Book; but his remonstrances must be rather short than long, gentle than rigorous; he must bear in mind that this sacrament is a sacrament of pity, a tribunal in which mercy presides, where souls should find peace and consolation, not affliction and trouble.

Finally, the confessor ought to be very careful to render himself easy of access to all, to exercise an equal charity towards all who present themselves, without refusing the poor and lowly to give himself to the rich and great. You shall make no distinction of persons, says God by the mouth of Moses; you shall hear the little as the great, you must not allow yourself to be dazzled with exterior splendor; you shall not be particularly attentive to one to the prejudice of another, neither shall you respect any man's person, *because it is the judgment of God*,[1] to whom all equally belong. It is related of St. Francis de Sales that he employed his leisure in speaking to all who desired it, that he never sent away, or declined to confer with any one; and he was accustomed to say that his time was as well employed in consoling the soul of a beggar, an abandoned woman, a little child, as in aiding a great man, a rich man, or a philosopher. He was as assiduous in hearing the confessions of poor women and servants as of ladies and princesses; he was even more desirous of hearing the poor; and if any exception of persons be allowed it ought to be in favor of the poor and unfortunate, not of the rich and prosperous. The venerable Father Lefevre being one day occupied in hearing the confessions of servants, the following thoughts entered his mind: What are you doing here?—have you come into Spain to waste your time among people of base extraction? Would it not be fitter to labor among great lords and princes, and dispose

[1] Deut. i. 17.

them for the sacrament of penance? But he quickly smothered this fume of pride by recalling the resolution he had formally made, of occupying his whole life in the functions that men esteem more vile, if he could thus render any service to God. He was then enlightened with a divine light, which showed him the particular esteem God makes of the assistance rendered to the poor; so that he became animated with new courage, and with still greater zeal to labor for the salvation of the poor, of peasants and of children, and the more so, as such persons are sometimes neglected, and very often it is more easy to convert them than the rich and great, because there are fewer obstacles to be vanquished.

IV. Before going into the confessional, the confessor ought to consider the importance of this sublime action; that he is about to open the gates of heaven, to snatch souls from hell, to bear children to God, to procure Him new instruments of glory, to apply the merits of the Blood of Our Lord, to open the treasures of His grace, to give judgments which precede and even regulate those of God, to pronounce irrevocable sentences of life or death, and with a few words to produce greater and more admirable effects than Moses produced with his miraculous rod. Considering these wonders, he should beseech God to assist him by His grace, to fulfil holily this function, and to administer this sacrament according to His will—to give him the knowledge, the affections, the words best suited to penetrate the hearts of his penitents; to send him those whom He has chosen to confide to him, that he may enlighten, fortify and console them, disposing them Himself to receive worthily His Grace and to begin a new life. He may, if he pleases, say the following prayer, which many use, and which some perhaps will be glad to find here: "Lord God, all-powerful, who willest not the death of a sinner but that he be converted and live, have pity on me, a miserable sinner!

Receive my humble prayers, which I address to Thy clemency, for Thy servants who wish to confess their sins; preserve them in future from contracting new vicious habits, through Jesus Christ." During confession, the confessor will listen to his penitents, then give them absolution with the modesty and propriety suitable to so holy an action—with attention, patience, meekness of spirit, compassion, charity, zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of his penitents; and the same affection with which Our Lord, who is in him, and against whom the sins were committed, hears and pardons them.

V. On this point, I think it well to give here the advice of Father Alvarez, which he fully carried out in practice. Behold what Father Dupont says in his life: In the guidance of souls, Father Alvarez perfectly combined the prudence of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove, through the knowledge he had acquired in prayer of the means necessary to operate this combination. The first and fundamental means was to seek only God in commerce with men, His glory and His good pleasure, with the purest intention, careless as to what regarded his own honor or contempt, indifferent as to whether he confessed the high or the lowly, patricians or plebeians. It was sufficient for him that God, who is solicitous for all, and who purchased all with His Son's Blood, had inspired them to come to him. Hence he said that he wished only for such penitents as God willed him to conduct, and that he desired to conduct them solely for the interest of God without any reference to self. In this design he conducted his penitents with intentions so pure that, as they themselves could see, in the direction of their consciences, he had God alone in view He received all who came to Him great and small; he neither despised the poor nor favored the rich; he had a horror of confessors who strove to gain honor by their penitents, who wished to hear only the great, and who

evinced little regard for the poor. He called this mode of acting void and ineffectual before God, *who made the great and the little*, as the Sage says, and has equal care of all. By these means he acted with all in a noble and sublime manner, and with great liberty ; for he loved his penitents not with an imperfect love, founded on flesh and blood, but with the love of charity and in purity of mind. He loved them not for himself but for God ; he sought not to derive from them any temporal profit, and, however importuned, he would accept nothing for himself, fearful of diminishing this holy liberty. He contracted no friendship so strict that he should have the least difficulty in breaking from the object of it when obedience required ; he would not permit his penitents to evince too natural a love for him, so that when he was absent, if they felt much pain at being separated from him, they durst not make it appear. He allowed them to go to another director whenever they pleased, provided this was done with reflection and not through levity. He did not entertain a high opinion of confessors who were jealous when their penitents confessed to others, and who kept them in a sort of captivity, forbidding them to treat with such as might be useful to them. He sometimes absented himself from the confessional that his penitents might, if they chose, speak to other confessors fearlessly. He prudently limited his employments, directing only as many as he could direct without fatiguing his head or retarding his own perfection ; he cared little to have many penitents, he desired only that those he had should advance in virtue, and that his communications with them should be useful to all parties. It is not the Spirit of our Institute, said he, to give ourselves to our neighbor on the right and the left, to secularize our mind and dissipate our heart ; we must act with weight and measure, as becomes truly spiritual persons, without failing in our exercises of piety. He who attracts the

greatest crowd is not the best evangelical workman, but he who without neglecting himself has his penitents best instructed, though he have but few. All his care consisted in making his penitents advance in virtue, in mortification of the passions, renunciation of pleasures, denial of their own will and judgment, in humility, patience, each according to his strength ; thinking that there are not any who are incapable of these things, provided they wish to be aided and are aided, for the ruin of souls comes only from want of a determined will and a sure hand to guide them.

SECTION XXX.

CONVERSATION.

I. Importance of conversation.—II. Qualities necessary for good conversation.

I. One of the most important and necessary things to those who profess to labor for the salvation of souls is conversation, since it is certain from the authority of the Holy Scriptures and Fathers, and daily experience, that good and wise conversation is the source of many and great goods, while bad and imprudent conversation is the source of many evils. Father Ribadaneira relates of St. Ignatius, that he regarded conversing with men as a function very proper to the Society ; but said that conversation, if badly carried on, did more harm than it could do good if well carried on. Hence the Prince of the Apostles wrote to the faithful : I exhort you, dearly beloved, as pilgrims and strangers, to abstain from carnal desires which makes war upon your souls, that your conversation may *be good*, not only among yourselves but even *among the Gentiles;* that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may, by the good works they shall *behold in you, glorify God,*[1]

[1] Peter ii. 12.

and be attracted to the faith you profess. St. Paul earnestly exhorts Timothy to render himself an example to the faithful, in words and *conversation*, because holy conversation has an extraordinary power to make an impression on the mind and excite to virtue. It was by this means, rather than by his sermons, that our Father, St. Ignatius, did such great things for the salvation of men, that he attracted his first nine companions, and many others. By the same means, St. Francis Xavier, in the Indies and Japan ; Father Lefevre, in Germany, Flanders and Spain ; Father Matthew Ricci and his colleagues in China, and several other great personages, have converted and saved so many souls, because good conversation renders a man agreeable to every one, and gives him as it were the key of hearts ; it makes people visit him, speak to him, confide in him, consult him and willingly follow his counsels. It is then certain that good conversation is very important : let us now see what the qualities of good conversation are.

II. St. Peter teaches us in general what these qualities are when he says : *Be holy in all your conversation ;* let the rays of sanctity shine in all parts of it, and according to the force of the Greek word, let it savor of nothing earthly. Nothing mundane should appear in our mutual relations, says St. Justin ; our conversations, our manner of acting, speaking, writing, saluting, should savor of heaven. *Our conversation is in heaven*, said St. Paul to the Philippians, and he adds : Strive to make your conversation worthy of the Spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is a spirit of purity, sanctity, humility, meekness, contempt of earthly things, affection to the things of heaven ; let your conversation be conformable to that of Jesus Christ on earth, which was an admirable conversation, divine and absolutely perfect. Ours ought to be like His, since He has been given us as a model. Persons consecrated to God,

says St. Gregory Nazianzen, as are all Christians, and especially Religious, should be wholly sacred, and manifest nothing profane. St. Peter, in saying that infidels, ought to be by consideration of us, excited to glorify God and change their conduct, uses a word which is applied to temples and the mysteries adored therein, to show that our conversation, our deportment, our words and all our actions should be sacred, venerable and divine, and such that they may be regarded with a sentiment of religion, as holy things are regarded. Let us converse like people living with God, says St. Cyprian, that all the world may see that God dwells in us. St. Austin says : Servants of God should in their conversations be modest, grave, prudent, pious, spotless and without reproach, that whoever sees them, may say with admiration : Assuredly those whose conversation is so excellent and so perfect, are men of God.

Let us now see more in detail the qualities with which conversation ought to be adorned. St Austin has already shown them ; St. Francis de Sales develops them more at large. "Conversation," says he, "ought to be modest, without weakness, grave without austerity, sweet without being forced or affected. It should not be contradictory ; it should be open and cordial, because men love to know those with whom they treat ; but it must be more or less frank according to the company, for it would not be well to discover one's-self to the insolent. We may show ourselves entirely to frank persons, but only through windows, to those who are of a sombre or melancholy disposition ; that is, but partially, because these persons are naturally suspicious." We reduce all these qualities to three : conversation should be sweet and grave, prudent, useful.

SECTION XXXI.

CONVERSATION SHOULD BE MEEK.

I. It ought to be sweet.—II. Modest and humble.—III. Reasonably gay.

I. Conversation should be sweet, polite and full of goodness ; rudeness, violence, anger, spite, vanity, audacity and all other defects which make it painful or weary, must be banished from it. We ought carefully avoid all these, says St. Thomas, because being born in society and living together, we should render ourselves agreeable to one another by the amiability of our discourse. For, as Aristotle says, no one would care to spend a day with a sad man with whom he could find no pleasure ; whence the Angelic Doctor concludes that every man is bound by a duty of good-breeding, to which nature obliges him, to live in such a manner that he will never be burdensome to those with whom he lives ; but that he strive to make himself agreeable to them, unless, for good reasons, he be obliged to manifest coldness of manner towards them.

Now, as regards words which form a great part of pleasing manners, we must watch very carefully over them. Plato said that to be successful in treating with men, it was necessary to use certain charms and enchantments, that is, sweet and agreeable words : thus the Holy Ghost teaches that a *sweet word* multiplies friends and appeases enemies, and that grace abounds on the lips of *good men.*

The lips of the just distill sweetness and graces, but the mouth of the wicked perverts ; the wise man renders himself amiable by his words, and it is said of the Spouse, "Thy lips, My Spouse, drop honey : honey and milk are under thy tongue." Whoever manifests this sweetness in words, may be certain that he will work wonders by his conversation, if he uses the gift as he ought ; for as the

greatest of the Roman orators said, it can hardly be imagined how powerful sweet and affable words are to gain hearts. Goodness is a quality pleasing to all, says St. Ambrose ; there is nothing so attractive to the human mind. If it be accompanied with pleasing manners, easy address, moderation in authority, affability in discourse, respect in words, patience to hear without interrupting, modesty and propriety, it is impossible to comprehend its immense power to captivate hearts. So David said : "They will hear my words *because they are sweet.*"[1]

Many servants of God have for the neighbor true charity, assist him in word and deed in his necessities with ardent and sincere affection ; but because they do it in a rough, ungracious manner, their kindness loses half its value, and works not nearly the effect it might work were it accompanied with sweetness. These people ought to go farther ; they ought to join to their charity benignity, which is the flower of charity, and gives it all its splendor and lustre ; it makes us give gracefully what we give, it replenishes our words with sweetness and amiability, and renders our conversation sweet and gracious. To be a servant of God one need not be coarse and rude ; quite the contrary, if one is a servant of God that is the very reason why he should be more civil and polite : if the servants of earthly kings take so much pains to appear gracious in their words, why should the servants of the King of heaven and the King of kings be rough and impolite ? Besides, exterior grace is necessary for all who would work usefully for the salvation of souls. I have always considered most important the sentiment of a holy religious, John of Jesus and Mary, who was very wise and enlightened in the things of God : he said that spiritual persons should evince towards all, every form of politeness, but in a nobler manner than seculars commonly do ; that they ought to be

[1] Ps. vi. 140. Juxta Haeb. et seq..

very deferential towards Superiors and speak to them as to Jesus Christ ; that they ought to treat equals with affection and frankness as brothers, and be gentle and condescending with servants as with their children. The terms of civility ordinarily adopted in good society, are not always mere compliment, which serve only to adorn conversation ; for the truly spiritual, who have in view the salvation of souls, they are excellent acts of virtue, which augment and intensify more and more the sacred fires of charity. We are sometimes forced to tolerate in the servants of God manners rather impolite, either because they have not been properly brought up, or because the close attention they bestow on interior things diminishes their attention to the exterior, or for other reasons ; but if pious people are rough and unpolished, they are not to be imitated on this point. We should strive to act with the propriety and good manners of truly virtuous persons, who ought certainly be the most perfect and pleasing of all persons, because there are not found in them the flatteries, the falsehoods and other defects of courtiers ; but they are frank and sincere, and possess all the condescension and considerateness they ought to have—the affability practised by the Saints as a sweet aliment of conversation, without which it would be cold and wearisome, and they carefully banish melancholy, which is the capital enemy of devotion.

There are many who fail in this duty, who, when they find themselves in company, fear to open their mouths, lest they should commit some fault. By this excesssive reserve they injure themselves ; they contract their minds and render themselves unskilful in the exercises of fraternal charity ; they wrong their neighbor by depriving him of the good they ought to do him, and would have done him, had they treated with him sweetly and graciously. In recounting the virtues of St. Antony, St. Athanasius par-

ticularly remarks, that his many years of solitude, the rude assaults he received from the demon, the austerity of his life, did not make him in the least degree rough or impolite ; he was extremely gracious in manner, sweet in his deportment, amiable in his looks, and affable in his words. Every one knows the profound respect which this Saint and St. Paul manifested for each other when there was question of dividing the loaf which God had miraculously sent them : St. Paul wished St. Antony to do it because he was the guest, and St. Antony wished St. Paul to do it because he was the elder ; finally, neither wishing to cede to the other, they broke it together, that they might, as it were, divide the honor. If we study the lives of the Saints who held communion with men, we shall not find one who was not remarkable for sweetness, affability and good breeding in a very high degree.

II. We must unite to meekness modesty and humility, as virtues absolutely necessary to render conversation agreeable and useful ; we must avoid dangerous snares, insolence, effrontery, an imperious tone, gestures or manner, and the smallest mark of vanity. We should be full of deference, avoid turning any one into ridicule, speak favorably of all, and testify by exterior marks our esteem for each according to his condition. Above all things, says St. Francis de Sales, beware of hurting, criticising, mocking any person ; it is foolish to suppose that you can do these things without incurring the hatred of those who are not obliged to bear with you. Such as despise are commonly despised, those who honor are honored, because what they give is restored to them. St. Bonaventure says, very wisely on the same subject : To be humble towards the neighbor, to respect him, to exercise fraternal charity towards him, this is an evident mark of a good conscience and a noble mind ; if you do not respect those with whom you live, it will be very difficult for you to benefit them.

III. Moreover, conversation to be perfectly meek ought to be reasonably gay ; we should not indulge in sombre and melancholy humors which spring from dark thoughts, and find vent in lugubrious discourse. St. Gregory of Nyssa, detailing the eminent virtues of St. Miletus, patriarch of Antioch, praises in a special manner the gayety by which he gained all hearts. On this subject St. Francis Xavier said to Father Barzé, whom he sent to Ormuz : Let your manners be pleasing, full of joy and serenity, and be not like those sour-visaged people who frighten every one away from them : the majority have already too much aversion for good things, which they would not have if virtue was made easy and attractive to them. Never lose the holy joy which should adorn the servants of God, not even when you are obliged to reprehend any one for defects ; for in correcting, you must use such charity and sweetness that it will be easy to perceive you regard the fault and not the delinquent. Writing to another, he says : "I beseech you, my dear Father, to avoid two extremes in your conversations : the one is, to converse and act in a manner wholly worldly which savors of the courtier ; the other is, to speak and act in a rude, austere manner, which is greatly opposed to the spirit of our Society ; for these two extremes are equally vicious and injurious in a Religious of our profession : the one shows that he has little recollection and care of his perfection, the other shows singularity, pride and arrogance. Preserve then a just medium, and let your conversation be a compound of piety, sweetness, modesty, humility and joy." The same Saint said to all the Jesuits in Cochin : Take care that your conversation be not grave and severe, as though you desired to be honored and reverenced ; make manifest your affability by a gay, smiling countenance, and great sweetness in your words." The advice this great Saint gave he practised himself in an eminent degree. Behold

what his biographer says of him: "Nature had given Xavier an air of gentleness and civility, which appeared in his gestures, his words and his whole deportment; God perfected this still more by His grace. Joy beamed on his countenance, easiness in his carriage, suavity in his communications; his look was so sweet and kind that it consoled the sick and rejoiced the healthy. We often went to him merely to be consoled and animated to fervor by his look and his words, for no one ever went away from him sad; every one he satisfied, strengthened and inflamed with new ardor. With the charms of his sweet, joyous and ravishing conversation, this holy man attracted all, the great and the little, the good and the bad; he did with them what he pleased, in spite of all difficulties. The Japanese said they could follow him everywhere, without pain or labor or weariness, because the delicious sweetness of his holy conversation served them for horses, carriages and litters."

To conclude, when we say that gayety is one of the greatest charms of conversation, we do not mean a light and foolish gayety, but a grave and moderate gayety. St. Chrysostom says: We must fly the vicious extremes, sadness and dissipation; let us indulge a moderate joy, full of modesty and good sense; we must have liberty, but not libertinism. Pontius the deacon says of St. Cyprian: "There shone upon his countenance so gravely joyful, a sanctity so great and so gracious, that all who beheld him were filled with admiration: his gravity was not sad, his joy was not unmeasured; he knew how to mingle the one and the other so happily, that one could not say whether he attracted more reverence than love, he equally meriting esteem and affection." It is related of St. Francis Xavier, that he knew how to unite perfectly in his conduct gravity and joy, so that all his words and actions breathed sanctity and inspired respect in those with whom he treated. We

read of St. Ignatius, who was extremely sweet in his manners, that he was as far from harshness as he was from levity; he was so grave and composed that he never raised his eyes or moved his hands or other members without reason; and whether standing, walking, sitting or reclining, he always observed the most exact propriety. St. Lawrence Justinian, one of the most perfect of men, well understood this secret; for according to the report of his nephew, Bernard Justinian, his sweetness, his affability, the gayety of his countenance procured him the love of all; while his whole deportment and all his movements rendered him venerable in every eye.

Now this gravity, tempered with gayety, consists in doing nothing precipitately, in avoiding clownish gestures, not laughing too boisterously or immoderately; not speaking in an impertinent, puerile, inconsiderate manner; eschewing whatever savors of the buffoon; not recounting indelicate words or actions; not mingling profane language in the discourse, for this should never sully the mouths of Religious or of those who make profession of piety. St. Bernard, who was a perfect model, and who by his conversations produced so much fruit among persons of every degree from Popes and kings downwards, says: When the soul has acquired that great propriety before God, which we call *decorum*, it appears exteriorly in the body, the light that was hidden within shines out, and illumines all the members and senses, so that the words, the looks, the gait, the laughter, and all the exterior actions become pure, modest, adorned with gravity and good grace: nothing light, lascivious or inconsiderate appears.

SECTION XXXII.

CONVERSATION OUGHT TO BE PRUDENT.

I. It should be prudent.—II. There should be nothing in it against God.—III. Suitable to the condition of the Speaker.—IV. And the persons addressed.—V. We should speak at the right time.—VI. Our discourse ought not to be too long.

I. The second quality requisite for good conversation is prudence, which ought to direct and govern it. Hence Our Lord said to His disciples when He sent them to treat with men : *Be prudent as serpents*, be not malicious, deceitful, artful, but *be simple as doves*, and withal very considerate. The animals that the prophet Ezechiel saw—a figure of just men—*were full of eyes*, to show, says St. Gregory, that the saints are very prudent in their conduct, and that their actions are accompanied with great circumspection. And indeed, if prudence is necessary to regulate every virtue, it is still more essential in conversation, in which all virtues ought to shine, and which presents so many and such great dangers.

II. The first counsel which prudence gives in this matter is to say nothing against virtue and the service of God. We must always act with prudence and judgment, says the holy Bishop of Geneva, remembering there is no rule which has not sometimes exceptions ; but this rule, which is the foundation of all others—*nothing against God*. Be as sweet, polite and gay as you please, provided God be not offended ; up to that point all is good, but beyond it nothing is good. As God is the rule of all right, essential purity and sovereign wisdom, all that is not conformable to Him, however polished and exquisite it appears to men, ought to pass only for impertinence, incivility and awkardness.

III. The second counsel of prudence is that each and all

ought to regulate his conversation and proportion it to his age, capacity and condition ; a thing which might be suitable in a secular would not always be so in a Religious. Liberties are permitted a young person which would be indecorous in an old person ; a learned man may do and say many things that an illiterate man should not. Prudence arranges things and gives each its own place.

IV. The third counsel of prudence is to be very attentive to the qualities and dispositions of the persons with whom we hold intercourse : men must be treated differently from women, the devout from those who lead ordinary lives, the great from the small, Superiors from inferiors and equals, and it is difficult to find two persons who ought to be dealt with exactly alike ; every heart must be opened with a different key. St. Paul gives this excellent advice to the Corinthians : Let your speech be always in grace, seasoned with the *salt* of discretion, so that you may know how to give an answer to every one. St. Paul warns us by this text, says St. Ambrose, to act differently with persons of quality, of medium rank and of the lowest condition ; we must not speak in the same manner to the meek and the choleric, with the latter we should be very gentle in order to cool their passion. We read that St. Ignatius, through the great spirit of discernment God had given him, knew at once the heart and disposition of those who came to him, and spoke of great and magnificent things to the ambitious, of commerce to the avaricious, of pleasure to the voluptuous, that he might be able, as he said, to catch them in their own nets. Father James Laynez, formed by him, accommodated himself in like manner to all ; he spoke of piety to the pious, of learning to the learned, of war to soldiers, of their trade to mechanics, to lead them sweetly and agreeably to discourse of their salvation. St. Bernard had given them an example of this, for his disciple relates that he spoke to all of good things

as the occasion presented itself, but always in a manner proportioned to their capacity ; he was a laborer with the peasant, a highly polished gentlemen with the noble, he used simple language with the simple, he introduced learned points with the *literati*, with virtuous persons he showed himself well skilled in spiritual things. Edinerus, secretary to St. Anselm, says of him that his conversation was most pleasing because of his sweetness and affability ; that he accommodated himself with singular facility to every one's disposition, finding out, instinctively as it were, the weak point in each, so that each avowed it was impossible to speak more to the purpose or go nearer to the heart. St. Paul gives this testimony of himself : "For whereas I was free, I made myself the servant of all that I might gain the more. And I became to the Jews a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. To them that are under the law as if I were under the law ; I conformed as far as I could to their ceremonies, *though I was not obliged to do so*, that I might ingratiate myself with them and gain their hearts. To them that were without the law as if I were without the law (whereas I was not without the law of God but was in the law of Christ,) that I might gain them that were without the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak : I became all things to all men that I might save all."[1]

This is one of the chief rules for conversing well ; it is necessary to have in a manner a universal soul, capable of accommodating itself to the dispositions of those with whom we treat, a pliant easy temper, a mind which can bend to the purpose. And in effect, if courtiers and others study with care the humors of those they wish to please—if they take all sorts of forms to accomplish their objects, as old Cataline among the Romans, and Alcibiades among the Greeks, who so naturally adopted the

[1] Cor. ix. 19.

manners of the high and the low that they seemed born for whatever society they chose to frequent,—the just whose designs are incomparably more noble and important for the glory of God and the good of souls, ought with far more reason force themselves to bend to the humors of all. Now we that are stronger, says St. Paul, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and *not to please ourselves* and seek our own satisfaction, but *let each of you please his neighbor unto good, unto edification, for Christ pleased not Himself;*[1] we must lower ourselves prudently, and graciously accommodate ourselves to human miseries in order to save souls. Now this charitable complacency consists in three things: 1, To foresee what might displease the neighbor in us, whether in gesture, deportment, conversation etc., and to retrench it; 2, what may please him, and to do it; 3, to proportion our discourse to his condition and capacity.

V. The fourth counsel of prudence is to speak at the proper time. My son, says the Holy Ghost, improve time,[2] or as Jansenius interprets, observe time. *Know the time,* was the constant advice of the ancient sages. The wise man will be silent till the proper time, says the Scripture; he will not produce his thoughts everywhere and under all circumstances, he will rather remain silent all day than the best things out of season, *but the fool observes not his time:* therefore a *wise word in the mouth of a fool will be rejected,* because it is not said at the right time; if spoken to, he interrupts the discourse without waiting to hear its conclusion; he answers with precipitation and confusion, paying no attention to what he says; he is so attached to his own opinion that the least contradiction piques him. The wise and prudent man acts otherwise: if one speaks to him he is attentive not to interrupt, he listens without apparent effort or impatience, he answers tranquilly and measuredly; if what is proposed do not merit his appro-

[1] Rom. xv. 1. [2] Eccl. xx. 7. 22.

bation, he manifests the defects with such sweetness and modesty that, far from giving offence, his auditors love and esteem him more; he does not evince displeasure if some one speak lightly and impertinently to him, but he supports it, and so attunes himself to the infinite varieties of human society that he corrects and ameliorates all he can, but never takes offence; he knows how to advance and to recede, to restrain and to give freedom; finally, he bends to circumstances that he may take all at the most accessible point. When Fathers Salmeron and Broët were sent as legates to Ireland, St. Ignatius advised them to be very moderate in their words, easy and patient in listening; to give to those who came to speak with them time to finish what they had to say, and afterwards to strive to satisfy them by a concise but very sweet answer. He recommended them to make themselves all to all with the Apostle, assuring them that similarity of manners, a reasonable complacence and respect for the feelings of others, were the most powerful charm to gain hearts. With lively and impetuous characters, said he, show activity and ardor, with composed and reserved persons be slow and deliberate; at first praise whatever you find good in people and dissemble their vices, and when you shall have attracted their hearts and gained their confidence, speak of their defects and strive gently to heal them. St. Ignatius practiced himself what he recommended so strongly. when obliged to dine abroad, he would first listen attentively to what the company had to say, and reflect on what seemed most useful to say to them; at the end of the repast he would make them a good discourse, and with such excellent effect that all were touched, and returned home not less refreshed in body than in soul. He used great address towards those who came to see him merely for pastime. As he had much business to transact he could not afford to waste his time; he would speak to them of

spiritual things, saying that this discourse would be useful to them if they took pleasure in it, and if they did not they would not return any more. St. Nilus, the younger, carried a good book in his hand when he received company, and, after conversing a little, took occasion to read some lines for their edification. St. Paul entering the city of Athens saw an altar which bore this inscription, "*To the unknown God*," and he took it for the text of the admirable discourse he made in the Areopagus, in which, as Venerable Bede remarks, admiring the prudence of the Apostle in thus accommodating himself to the Greeks, he uses the authority of their poets to prove the truth he announced. In general, it is good to commence conversation by what we know to be agreeable to the persons with whom we converse, and then proceed to what is useful for their salvation; or to hear graciously what they have to say, whatever it is, provided it be not bad, and afterwards speak to them of God who ought always be the end we propose to ourselves: we should begin by going part of the road of the listener, and finish by bringing him back our own road.

If any one recounts to you something you already know, listen quietly, preserve the serenity of your countenance, and propriety in your movements, and do not manifest by words or gestures that you are tired of his discourse; that you know already what he tells you. Remember men could say nothing to Our Lord but what He knew from all eternity, that nothing was novel to Him, and yet He listened to them as long as they wished with the greatest patience and goodness.

When you come in contact with any person who is rude, indiscreet or tiresome, watch carefully over yourself that you may not evince impatience or weariness; support him with goodness and charity, remembering that God, who is infinite beauty and wisdom, deigns to treat with the most vulgar, and is pleased to converse with the simple, and

that the Holy Ghost says: He that is patient is governed with much wisdom; but he that is impatient exalteth his folly. The learning of a man is known by patience, and his glory is to pass over the wrongs[1] and miseries he encounters in his intercourse with men.

VI. The fifth counsel prudence gives, is that discourse should not be too long, not only because this is unnecessary, and because the time lost therein might be employed in more important things, but also because Solomon says: "In many words there shall not want sin, and he that refraineth his tongue is most wise." It is difficult to speak much without committing some fault; besides, the words of a great talker are not much valued or esteemed, and they have but little influence. It is related of St. Lawrence Justinian, who was distinguished among the men of his time for his conversational powers, that he was affable, concise and energetic in his discourse. The best things cease to be such when they are in excess; bread is good, honey is good, wine is good, but yet too much of any of them would not only not be good, but would be prejudicial. Thou hast found honey, says the Sage, eat what is sufficient for thee, lest being glutted therewith thou shouldst be unable to retain it. It is not good for a man to eat much honey. Then he gives this great secret of conversation: "Withdraw thy foot from the house of thy friend; be not too prodigal of thy presence, too frequent in thy visits, restrain thy intercourse within just limits, *lest* disgusted with seeing thee so often, *he come to hate thee.*" Excess changes the sweetest viands into the most bitter; it is a venom which corrupts them. Hence the ancients laid such immense stress on that celebrated sentence, *Not too much of anything*, and regarded it as one of the first principles of wisdom Maffei says that St. Ignatius was cautious not to speak too much even of spiritual things,

[1] Prov.

lest he should weary his visitors. When St. Francis Xavier conversed familiarly with the Japanese on heavenly things, he interspersed his discourse with the most beautiful matters of philosophy and astronomy, the motions of the planets, the solar and lunar eclipses, the causes of snow and thunder, subjects which he understood perfectly, and by this prudent mixture rendered his discourse very profitable and agreeable.

SECTION XXXIII.

CONVERSATION SHOULD BE USEFUL.

Behold the third and last quality conversation ought to have; it must be useful to those with whom we converse. The end of the Christian hierarchy is to perfect itself and to perfect others, says St. Denis. And the design with which our Society was established is to apply to our own salvation and that of the neighbor in such a manner that our conversations, our visits and all the intercourse we maintain with our fellow-creatures ought to refer to this as to their last end.

I. According to this rule, we should strive to render our conversation profitable to those with whom we treat; we must aid them in their spiritual and temporal wants, and testify regret when we are unable to do so, showing our good-will to do so as soon as possible. Our words must be good and holy, calculated to instruct, to fortify and to encourage all to do good: for this purpose we must consider our words well, prepare what we have to say that we may say it usefully and agreeably. Antiphonius, the sophist, professed to ameliorate human miseries, and as he was an excellent speaker, he went to the principal cities in Greece, delivering splendid discourses, as lenitives to

solace the afflicted, and heal the wounds of their souls. The mouth of the just man is a source of life, says the Sage. St. Athanasius relates of St. Antony, that by his familiar discourses, his affable and prudent words, he consoled the sorrowful, lifted up the depressed, instructed the ignorant, appeased those who were in anger, persuaded all that there is nothing which they ought to prefer to the love of Jesus Christ; and, to animate them to virtue, he placed before their eyes the benefits they had received, and the recompense prepared for them. St. Gregory of Nyssa says of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, that he entertained with good discourse the persons who were with him, even during his travels; he spoke incessantly of the eternal rewards which await us, and said that other things did not so much as merit a thought. St. Chrysostom manifested his zeal for the salvation of souls, not only in the pulpit, but in private houses, in his ordinary conversations; he spoke of virtue, especially of the sanctity and heroic actions of the Religious who lived in the desert; those who heard him were so moved that they wept abundantly, and either retired into solitude or became better Christians in the world. Possidonius says of the great St. Austin: "He taught and preached the word in public and private, in the Church and in dwelling-houses; and this is not astonishing. He who loves Jesus Christ carries Him everywhere, the charity of Christ presseth him; he wishes to imprint on all hearts the knowledge and love of Christ." We read of St. Dominic that he was quite remarkable for his sweetness, his affability, his gayety, his candor, his compassion; all these virtues won him the love of those who conversed with him even for a few moments. In whatever place he was, whether with his companions or with seculars, with prelates or with princes, he always introduced some devotional topic; hence he kept, as it were, in reserve a quantity of sacred examples, well chosen, which he used appropriately, and

by means of which he sought to kindle in hearts the love of God ; he everywhere proved by word and work that he was a truly apostolic man. We know how St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier and other lights of our Society, as well as all holy personages, have acted in this particular, and the immense good their pious discourse operated in all who had the happiness of hearing them. Father Thomas Sanchez, so celebrated for his learning and virtue, wrote with his own hand in his memoirs the following words : I will always strive in my conversations to introduce something holy, not only when I speak to my brethren but even to strangers, that all with whom I converse may carry something good away from me. But the wise even among the pagans did this ; Pythagoras, Socrates and Epictetus spoke of the beauty of virtue, the ugliness of vice and the eradication of vicious habits, to all who visited them. Seneca says : In all our actions and conversations, we must mingle something good which may be useful to others.

But to show how we may converse usefully, I will recount what is related of the Venerable Peter Faber, a man endowed with rare ability both in what regarded himself and what regarded others. He first strove to gain every one by the sweetness and affability of his words, by great goodness and benevolence of manner, which he knew how to accompany with true Christian humility ; he always gave place to all, even the lowliest ; familiarized himself with all sorts of persons that he might attract them to himself and afterwards gain them to Jesus Christ ; and he declared in his letters that he found this means very successful. Moreover, he sought to win the good graces of the tutelary angels of those with whom he treated, confiding greatly in their power in a thousand ways to dispose the wills of men, and counteract the efforts of the wicked spirits. To gain the affection of a body, he labored to insinuate himself into the minds of the chiefs, magistrates

and princes on whose example other men would be sure to form themselves. In whatever company he was, he always sought to entertain them by good discourse ; in churches, houses, public places, streets, at table, during his journeys, he let slip no occasion of recalling the things of God. For this purpose he discoursed in a manner calculated to interest his hearers, interspersed his conversation with good counsels, and proportioning it to the condition and capacity of each. He judged it very suitable that the members of the Society should, wherever they went, leave some traits of their holy conversation, cast some grains of good seed, after the example of Our Lord, who willed that the least of his actions, even a look, should not be unprofitable to men ; and as those who enter the house of a perfumer come out perfumed, so those who visit religious ought to leave them only when they shall have been enbalmed with their good odors and pious discourse. The same Father was very circumspect in his visits, making them only when necessary, seeking to render himself profitable to his neighbor without injuring himself, uniting himself to men without disuniting himself from God : he received lords, ladies and persons of inferior rank in such a manner that he never failed to carry with him an interior solitude in which he preserved the religious spirit ; for as he sought God everywhere he found Him everywhere, and in all sorts of company.

This is a very slippery point for those who profess to labor for the salvation of souls, unless they watch carefully over the manner in which they make these visits. Whoever knows how to labor worthily for the salvation of the neighbor, and has a care of his own perfection, or even of his salvation, must be on his guard, and retrench all useless rambles, all journeys of curiosity, all visits made merely to gather the news of the day, as sources of many distractions and sins, of relaxation in religious discipline, of dis-

gust for spiritual things and of affection for terrestrial things. O, exclaims St. Lawrence Justinian, in the bitterness of his heart, how many Religious who, like burning and shining lights shone before men, became, by little and little, secularized by commerce with seculars, grew remiss in the exercises of devotion, and miserably resumed the actions of a worldly life! Behold what intercourse with seculars leads to when it is not guided by the Spirit of God. They mingled with other nations and learned their works, says David. Our visits should be visits of grace, not visits of nature, to aid our neighbor as those of Our Lord and the Saints, and not merely to kill time. For this object three things are requisite: 1, To propose to ourselves for the end in all our visits, the utility of our neighbor, and to beseech God to bless our visits; 2, to act with wisdom and prudence, seizing the occasions which present themselves of speaking of God, not losing sight of the divine presence in all our discourses and movements; 3, to examine, on concluding, each visit how we have made it, whether in the spirit of God or for our own satisfaction; whether it has been useless or otherwise, whether too long or too short, etc., and we must resolve to correct as soon as possible any defect we may have committed.

SECTION XXXIV.

MODEL OF A CONVERSATION PERFECT IN ALL THINGS, ON WHICH WE OUGHT TO FORM OURS.

I. The conversation of Our Lord.—II. It was most sweet.—III. Most prudent.—IV. Most useful.

I. This model is Our Lord Jesus Christ who, in becoming man and dwelling on earth, has given us an example of the highest degree of humility, obedience, charity and

all other virtues, and who has left us the model of perfect conversation. Like the orient from on high He hath visited us, said Zachary; He has been seen on earth and has conversed with men, said Baruch. The sacred Spouse speaking of the conversation of her Beloved, compares it, because of its excellence, to perfumes which shed abroad a sweet odor. Ravished with its ineffable charms, she exclaims: Thou art beautiful, my love! *Thou art full of grace* in all Thy actions, in Thy words, in Thy repose, in Thy gestures, in Thy whole deportment. David says of Him that He was clothed with grace and beauty as with a garment. He dwelt at Nazareth, which signifies a flower; He was called a Nazarite because, as St. Thomas says, He willed that His conversation should exhale perfume like a flower. How great, then, must be the charms of such a conversation!

II. The three qualities chiefly necessary to good conversation, namely, sweetness accompanied by a grave gayety, prudence and utility, shone in the conversation of Our Lord with wonderful brilliancy. As regards His sweetness, St. Bernard says: When I recall my Jesus, I represent to myself a man sweet, humble of heart, meek, sober, chaste, merciful, adorned with the greatest sanctity and the most wonderful grace; Jesus is sweet in His words, for grace is spread out on His lips; milk and honey flow from His mouth. He is sweet in His countenance, for He is beautiful above the sons of men. He is sweet in His Name, which signifies Saviour, and He is sweet in His works, since He has done all things well. Explaining the mystery of the odor of sweetness, St. Denis says: "We believe that the divine Jesus is this odor of sweetness, that it is He who replenishes the intelligent part of our soul with a pleasure, all divine by the spiritual odor of His celestial influence. Hence the mystic composition of the balm which the Church blesses, typifies how Jesus, who is the

divine balm whence all sweet odors flow, sheds His perfumes on intelligences capable of receiving them." One of the names which the learned Hebrews give Him, signifies mercy, clemency and sweetness, and this Divine Saviour Himself said: *Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart.* He has shown it by receiving little children with so much tenderness, and caressing them with so much goodness. When St. James and St. John wished Him to make fire descend from heaven to burn the city that refused them hospitality, He told them that they knew not His Spirit, which is a spirit of meekness and not of rigor, and that He came not to destroy men but to save them. He heard every one with unparalleled goodness and patience, without interrupting, though He knew all they had to say before they opened their mouths. He received with sweetness the poor, the miserable and the sinful—spoke to them with the greatest affability, consoled them with tenderness, pardoned their sins with the greatest mercy, invited them with ineffable goodness to have recourse to Him, saying: "Come to Me, all you who are afflicted and I will console you." When after His Resurrection He appeared to His Apostles, who had either denied Him or fled from Him, He deigned to eat with them, and was not such condescension eloquently expressive of the greatest goodness, and far beneath what we should expect of the newly risen Jesus?

I will relate here a memorable fact which St. Paulinus recounts which will serve to prove the extreme goodness of Our Lord. Several vessels one day left a Sardinian port, in one of which was a poor old man named Vulgius, a catechumen, whose office it was to work at the pump. After some time all these vessels except that in which Vulgius was, were wrecked. The sailors fearing that this vessel would meet the fate of the rest, took skiffs and carried away all the crew except Vulgius, whose life they did

not consider of much importance. He, coming up from the hold, looked around everywhere, and seeing no one was terribly frightened and astonished. Solitude only augmented the horror of his situation; he passed six days and nights without eating or drinking, after which Our Lord appeared to Him accompanied by angels, spoke to him, consoled him, and gave him to eat. To rescue the vessel from the imminent peril in which it was, and to oblige him to labor according to his strength, Our Lord told him to cut down the mast. Vulgius obeyed, and what several strong men could not do with many strokes, this poor old man did in two. Our Lord then ordered him to fit the vessel for a voyage, and when his own labor proved insufficient, the angels helped him. Our Lord would not allow him to remain idle, but obliged him to do as much as he could. He even changed his name, calling him Victor instead of Vulgius; and what is still more admirable, and shows clearly the goodness of this Divine Saviour, is, that if Vulgius slept when he should work, Our Lord awaked him by touching him gently with His soft hand, in order not to frighten him, or laying a finger on the extremity of his ear. When after labor he felt weary, this loving Father took him on His knees and made him sleep on His Bosom, like St. John. He spoke words full of sweetness to console him, invited him to sit at His feet, and this man, despised by all the world, rested at the feet of the Redeemer of men, while this amiable Saviour held the helm and guided the ship. After twenty-three days, Victor arrived at a port in Calabria, the inhabitants of which having learned what had happened, led him to Saint Paulinus, who baptized him. The Saint adds, that the good old man related to him this great benefit of Our Lord with such heartfelt gratitude that neither of them could restrain his tears, and Paulinus deemed it a favor to touch the ear which Our Divine Saviour had deigned to touch.

This goodness of Our Lord was accompanied with a sweet gayety and gravity. His conversation has no bitterness, says the Sage ; His company has no tediousness, but joy and gladness. The Prophet Isaiah, cited by St. Matthew, says of His conversation : *He shall not cry out*, or dispute, but He shall be replenished with sweetness and equity, *neither* shall his voice be heard in the streets ; the bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax He shall not extinguish : He shall not be sad or troublesome. So His conversation was gracious and gay, His face serene, His eyes full of sweetness, His words kind ; yet He was always serious, always grave, never laughed, speaking His words, and performing his actions with great modesty and perfect propriety.

III. With regard to prudence, it appeared in all its splendor in the holy conversation of Our Lord. He treated His Apostles with the greatest circumspection and condescension, though they were only fishermen. He accommodated Himself to the capacity of His hearers, seizing adroitly every occasion to say something useful for their salvation, as we see, for example, in His meeting with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, to whom He spoke of the water of grace, taking occasion from the material water He asked of her ; He bore with patience their weakness, dissembled some faults, reprehended others with infinite address ; in short, in all His actions, words and movements, there shone with resplendent beauty all the lights of the highest prudence.

IV. As to utility, it is evident that the happiness of men was the only end of His conversation, since He made not a step which was not infinitely profitable to them. He went through the cities and villages of Judea, entered houses, sought company, only to cast everywhere the seed of salvation and to speak of the kingdom of God. Thus the Spouse says of Him : Thy lips are lilies which distill

the most exquisite myrrh ; lilies because of the purity of His words, myrrh because of the utility and salutary effects of His conversation. Such was the conversation of Our Lord ; it was sweet, prudent, useful, adorned with the highest degree of every virtue : it is on this model that we ought to form ours ; let us at least strive to imitate Him and propose to ourselves the same end.

SECTION XXXV.

OF MODESTY.

I. Excellence of modesty.—II. Two species of modesty.—Its effects. It composes the countenance.—IV. The words.—V. The walk and gestures.

I. This virtue is one of the most essential. We will say something about it which may serve as a conclusion to all we have said on fraternal charity.

Modesty composes, with propriety, all the movements of the body, disposing all with the most beautiful order and symmetry, according to the rule of reason. It regulates the walk, the looks, the manner of speaking, and in general all the exterior movements of the body. The form which modesty gives consists in a certain justness and propriety, both in regard to the person who possesses it, and those with whom that person may treat. It is perfectly appropriate in business, time and place. Hence it is called modesty, that is, *mode*, or fashion, given to the movements. The Greeks gave it a name which signifies a beautiful and agreeable arrangement. Whence we may conclude that it has various forms according to the diversity of ages and conditions. Thus the modesty of an aged Religious employed in great labors, is not that of a novice ; the reserve *(retinue)* of a man of forty is not that of a young girl ; so that what would be unbecoming in the one would not be so in the other.

II. There are two sorts of modesty : one forced and deceitful, the modesty of hypocrites, which appears only when it suits their honor or interest, but which vanishes when they are with their confidants. The other is true and solid, founded on virtue ; it is of this we treat. Its source, says St. Thomas, is in interior modesty, of which St. Peter said : "The ornaments of our interior man are the constancy and incorruption of a tranquil and modest spirit."[1] This modesty is grounded, firstly and chiefly, on the thought of the presence of God, before whom man holds himself in the greatest abasement and most profound respect, as before the infinite majesty of the Sovereign Lord : Secondly, on mortification of the passions which, being subject to reason, make no impressions on the body which are not well regulated ; and lastly, on application to prayer, which restrains with efficacious meekness all the interior and exterior senses ; makes the soul taste God, embalms it with His delights, and takes from it the desire of spreading itself abroad. This modesty never belies itself, either by day or by night, with superiors or inferiors, with monarchs or plebeians, with friends or with strangers ; it is the same whether one is alone or in company, because God is everywhere, and is everywhere worthy of infinite respect. Respect for God's presence, says the Sage, preserves modesty, and this modesty procures man riches, glory and life. Without the presence of God it is difficult, or rather impossible, to have uniform modesty, but with the sentiment of the divine presence the practice of modesty is easy.

III. The acts of this virtue are numerous, for it applies rule and compass to all the members, to all the senses, to all the physical movements, there is no exterior function whether of gesture, word, gait, sleep, clothing, etc., which it does not regulate and direct. It governs with particu-

[1] Ep. III. 4.

lar care the head and countenance ; it directs that the head be held erect, slightly bent forward, without inclining to the right or the left ; not turning about with levity, but only when necessary, and then with gravity ; to have the eyes lowered, not moving them with too much promptitude, but gently, not regarding people with a rude stare, but with eyes full of sweetness and goodness, like those the Holy Ghost attributes to His Spouse when he says : "Thy eyes are as the *eyes of doves*," amiable, innocent, sincere. Finally, it teaches to keep the forehead serene, without frowning, or contracting it, as if one were in mental or bodily pain, to keep the lips neither too compressed nor too far apart, but joined with propriety ; it keeps the countenance cheerful, avoiding equally levity and severity ; it forbids immoderate laughter, contractions of the nose, contortions of the mouth, etc., and ordains that the air of the countenance be gravely joyous, sweet and tranquil.

Saints and sages have always been most careful to compose their countenance, as being the part most exposed to the view of men, and by which the movements of the soul are most easily discovered. The wise man is known by his face,[1] says the Holy Ghost ; by it he is distinguished from the fool. However little favored by nature, the wise man composes his countenance with modesty, sweetness, joy and gravity, while the imprudent man renders himself despicable by the disorder of his face. Wisdom shines on the face of the prudent man, says the Holy Ghost ; it does not remain shut up in his soul, it irradiates his countenance, on which it imprints serenity, propriety and reserve, but the eyes of the fool are always wandering abroad. St. Athanasius relates of St. Antony, that his countenance was so modest and amiable, so expressive of his interior graces, that those who were unacquainted with him easily

[1] Prov. 17. 24.

distinguished him among his Religious by the expression of his face. The purity and sanctity of his soul were stamped thereon, his countenance was never sad but always gay, and invariable under all circumstances. St. Bernard, says his biographer, was exteriorly adorned with a special beauty, not so much physical beauty as a certain spiritual grace. On his countenance shone a celestial splendor; his eyes beamed with angelic purity and innocence; the beauty of his soul appeared in his body; his whole *physique* was, as it were, bedewed with the torrent of grace in which his soul was submerged, and irradiated by the splendid lights of his most pure mind. We read of St. Dominic, that his face was always serene and joyous, unless when moved with compassion for the afflictions of his neighbor. And his gayety was not terrestrial or mundane; it was wholly religious, and at the same time so efficacious that, by the divine attractions of his countenance and the sweet glances of his eye, he gained the hearts of all who approached him. Does not the Holy Ghost say of the Israelites, after the defeat of Holofernes, that *they were joyous and had the faces of saints*,[1] teaching us by this that saints have not sad and morose countenances, but that they are gay and open. He says, elsewhere, "The just, whether rich or poor, have always a good heart towards the Lord and a joyous countenance."

IV. Yet more, modesty regulates the manner of speaking; it will neither permit too much taciturnity, nor too much fluency of words; it does not interrupt others, but gives every one time to speak in his turn; its tone of voice is neither too high nor too low; it speaks neither too fast nor too slow. It is neither rough nor effeminate, says St. Ambrose, and he had already said: "Let modesty balance the tone of your voice that it may not wound the ears of your hearers by being too harsh; let it watch over your

[1] Judith xvi. 24.

words that nothing improper may issue from your mouth." St. Paul had said before him : *Let no bad word*, or according to the force of the Greek, *no corrupt word*, come out of your mouth, but only words which are good and edifying, that you may be agreeable and useful to those who hear you ; banish all words that savor of bitterness, anger, indignation, all clamors which come from malice,[1] and which injure the neighbor ; for if they are repugnant to the other virtues, they are therefore contrary to modesty.

V. Modesty regulates the walk ; it must neither be too slow nor too hurried ; it must not evince levity or affectation, but be grave and proper. St. Ambrose observes : "We must approve of that gait which is grave, tranquil and sweetly majestic, provided it be not too studied or affected, but simple and natural. Such was the gait of the Spouse, hence the Holy Ghost says of her : How beautiful are thy feet, O My Love."[2]

As regards the manner of sitting, we must be careful not to seek our ease, to recline indecently, to cross the feet, etc., observing the propriety which consists in keeping the body in a right posture, and each member in the position in which it ought to be.

In short, modesty rules all the gestures ; it restrains the hands in repose, or, if it be necessary to move them, it gives them but a moderate movement. It banishes all ridiculous gestures and grimaces ; agitation of the arms, limbs and shoulders. It teaches us how to act at table—to sit composedly and decently, without eating too fast or swallowing our food with too much rapidity—to lower the eyes when we drink. It corrects those incivilities which are easily committed when we are not upon our guard. In a word, it regulates the whole man, in order that, as St. Austin says, there may be nothing in him offensive to

[1] Ep. iv. 29. [2] Cant. vii. 1.

those who see him, but that all may be suitable to the gravity and sanctity of the Christian profession.

SECTION XXXVI.

CONTINUATION.

I. The excellence of modesty should excite us to practice it.—II. The interests of the neighbor.

Modesty is a very important virtue, the practice of which is more difficult than we think ; for, to practise it in a perfect manner, the succor of all the other virtues is necessary, since all disorders are only interior or exterior violations of modesty. It requires a continual remembrance of the presence of God, and the exercise of daily mortification, to repress not merely vicious or disorderly motions but a thousand useless or superfluous movements to which nature is inclined, and to subject man in all times and places, and under all circumstances, to grace. To accomplish this the most particular attention and vigilance over self are requisite.

I. What ought, in the first place, to excite us to practise this virtue is its excellence, which made St. Ambrose say, that modesty is like a ray of the Divinity ; because since God, as the Sage says, made all things with weight, measure and number, so modesty applies to the whole man rule and compass. In the second place, our interest ought to excite us to practise this virtue, because it renders us pleasing to God, amiable to the angels and venerable to men. It confers a special beauty and glory on all the members it directs, just as a rich garment beautifies a person, while a mean garment renders him almost despicable ; modesty gives a man a great lustre, while immodesty degrades and vilifies him. Moreover, it conduces to pur-

ity of heart, to recollection of mind, and to the acquisition of every virtue, because it restrains the senses, which the Scriptures call the gates of death, that nothing injurious may enter in, and this restraint is one of the greatest secrets of the spiritual life and one of the greatest means of salvation ; because, according to the maxim of philosophers, nothing enters the mind except through the senses. The disposition of the soul to virtue and purity will be great in proportion to the fewness of the exterior things which distract and sully it. Vices, says St. Jerome, enter into the soul by the five senses as by windows ; enemies cannot enter the soul unless they come through the doors, that is, through the senses. St. Ambrose elegantly says : "The eye looks, the heart is seized ; the ear is opened, the mind turns its attention ; the nostrils are distended, your soul is pre-occupied ; the tongue tastes, crime has entered the heart ; the touch has enkindled within you the fire of concupiscence. Death has entered by the window, exclaims the Prophet : the window is your eye ; close it, and you will preserve your life." For this reason the ancient Fathers, as Cassian relates, laid it down as the principle and foundation of perfection, that it was necessary to become blind, deaf and dumb, that is, to watch carefully over the senses, to use them with caution, lest otherwise the soul be filled with phantoms which trouble its serenity and destroy piety. Thus the Holy Ghost says of His Spouse in the Canticles : "My Sister, my Spouse is a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up. Thy plants on a paradise of pomegranates, with the fruits of the orchard. Cypress with spikenard. Spikenard, saffron, sweet cane and cinnamon, with all the trees of Libanus, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief perfumes[1] there abound.

Since modesty procures such great and numerous advantages, it is easy to see that those who regard this vir-

[1] Cant. iv. 12

tue as of little importance are greatly deceived; because, in exciting us to watch over our senses, by which things created enter, and things divine go out, it casts out the root of many evils and produces great goods. If the interior parts of the body are in a state of suffering, this appears in the color and expression of the countenance, if they are sound, they imprint on the whole exterior the marks of health. In like manner, when the mind is well ordered, it composes all the movements of the body, and the happy disposition of soul, which is seen only by God and His angels, shines exteriorly, and makes itself seen by men in the modesty of the looks, reserve of the tongue, gravity of the walk, and propriety of the whole deportment. Men often judge of the interior from the exterior, of the disposition of the soul from that of the body. "The disposition of the mind appears by that of the body," says St. Ambrose: "Our interior man is light or grave, constant or inconstant, according to the movements of the body; these movements are a voice which the soul uses to explain the situation in which she is." The Father proved this truth by the example of two persons, one of whom he refused to admit to orders though he was urged to admit him, simply because his deportment was not as decorous as the Saint desired; and he forbade the other, who was already a priest, to walk before him at ceremonies; because there was in his gait a something which seemed insolent, and was offensive to the beholders. He added, some time after: "I was not deceived in the judgment I formed about these men, for they both not long after fell openly; one quitted the Church of Milan, the other abandoned even the Catholic Church, and became an Arian." Aristotle said that we might form our opinion of most people from their exterior movements. St. Basil says, very well: "As the soul being enclosed in the body cannot unveil itself, it uses the body as its interpreter; the eyes,

the ears, the exterior motions are, as it were, its instruments. By these means souls discern each other, and hold mutual intercourse ; by this means, also, we may see them as in a mirror, and judge of their beauty : the soul being hidden in the body can be seen only by the actions it produces in this body." And the Holy Ghost had already said in energetic terms : A man is known by his look, and a wise man when thou meetest him, is known by his countenance. The attire of the body, and the laughter of the teeth, and the gait of the man show what he is.

II. Not only our own interest but also that of our neighbor ought to excite us powerfully to the practice of this virtue ; because as the exterior only can be seen, and because it is from it that we judge of the interior, we may serve our neighbor very much by edifying him, and acting in a manner calculated to win his esteem ; and we can injure him very much if we do not act in this manner. Thus it sometimes happens that some learned and clever men who labor in the salvation of souls lose half their credit, and produce not the fruit they might produce, because they are light in their manners, and disorderly in their exterior ; while if they had suitable modesty and reserve, their labors would be much more fruitful, their words more penetrating, their actions more effective, than their long discourses. St. Ignatius the martyr, writing to the Philadelphians, said, that after having seen their bishop he was ravished with his rare modesty, which spoke more than it was possible to speak in words. Every one knows that St. Francis sometimes preached and sent his Religious to preach, not from the pulpit, but by taking several turns through the city, with great modesty and gravity, judging that this mute eloquence had so much the more power over souls as the sight is a surer sense than the hearing. The sight of a just man, says St. Ambrose, who renders himself as the image of God by the modesty of his deportment, is precious,

and produces great fruit. His look inspire sanctity; the glances of his eye communicate virtue to those who behold him; his aspect rejoices the perfect and corrects the vicious. What a consolation it is to be profitable by our very deportment to those who behold us!

St. Chrysostom relates of St. Miletus, patriarch of Antioch, that he inflamed hearts with the desire of divine things, not only when he spoke in public or private, but even when people cast their eyes on him; because it is not merely the words of the Saints that are efficacious, as the same Father observes, but even their very looks. The Marquis Remier used to say that the sight of St. Romuald made more impression on him than that of the emperor, or of any man living; that it silenced him at once, and rendered him powerless to excuse himself.

St. Colette, a virgin of eminent virtue, arrested by her look the thoughts of the sinful men who came to her, and inspired them with the love of chastity. The quaint Cardinal of Vitry wrote of the Blessed Mary d'Oignes these memorable words: Her deportment was so well regulated that it showed the perfect order which reigned in her soul; she walked, her eyes lowered, with a grave, composed step which evinced her humility; the abundance of graces with which her heart was replenished so irradiated her countenance that several, by barely looking at her, were moved to tears of devotion; her whole exterior was so redolent of piety and of the unction of the Holy Spirit, that it urged all who saw her to virtue. St. Bernardine of Sienna by his presence alone checked the libertinism of his companions, and kept them to their duties. It is said of St. Bernard that his modest and well regulated deportment manifested his humility, breathed piety and rendered him at once pleasing and venerable, so that the sight of him gained hearts and inspired virtue. Pope Innocent II., visiting Clairvaux, was so edified at the modesty of the

Saint and his brethren, who did not raise their eyes to look at him or his retinue, that he and the Cardinals and Prelates who accompanied him were affected to tears, and inspired with more ardent desires of perfection than if they had heard many sermons. St. Gregory of Nyssa records of St. Ephrem, that without pronouncing a word he had only to show his angelic countenance to inspire in those who saw him compassion for the poor and unfortunate; no one could regard him without being excited to reverence, and becoming better. We read of the learned doctor and generous martyr St. Lucian, that his countenance shone with majesty, his deportment was so pleasing and his air so modest that his very presence converted pagans, and persuaded them to embrace the faith of Jesus Christ. The Emperor Maximian having heard this, desired to see him, but when Lucian came before him the tyrant durst not look at him, lest, attracted by the grace of his eyes and the charms of his incomparable modesty, he should be constrained to become a Christian; he spoke to him through a screen.

The deportment of St. Louis Gonzaga was so well ordered and so modest that it excited the admiration of all, and was extremely profitable to the whole Roman College. When he passed in or out, many of the students would stop to see him pass; a Priest who had already finished his theology used to come to the lecture room merely that he might see him. He excited to contrition and devotion all who saw him; those who treated with him were obliged to be on their guard, and to watch over their actions. Even grave Fathers assumed a still more grave deportment on entering his presence; no one ever dared to indulge in his presence the smallest levity of word or act. Blessed John Berchmans was so modest and well regulated in his whole exterior that several of the Fathers said that if the rules given by St. Ignatius on modesty were

lost, one could re-write them all by looking at Berchmans. Others went still farther and said, that if an angel became incarnate he could not observe greater modesty. Those who went to class with him called him the modest Father; they waited in the court to see him come to lecture and return, and they were so much edified that they besought those of the house to recommend them to his prayers. The day he sustained his *thesis*, at the end of his course of philosophy, some of his fellow students seeing him in the pulpit were so rejoiced that they could not forbear exclaiming: Behold the modest Father, we shall remain here that we may have the pleasure of looking at him for two whole hours. It is true then, as these examples clearly show, that a well-regulated exterior has great power over the neighbor, and consequently those who labor for the salvation of souls ought to watch with the greatest care over this matter. If they cannot now see its immense importance, let them at least take it on faith, till God shall have given them more light.

All these reasons drawn from the excellence of modesty, from our own interest and from the interest of our neighbor, ought powerfully to excite us to the practice of this virtue. Let us regulate according to its laws our words, our gait, our comportment, our movements: whether alone or in company, in our chambers or in public, let us realize what is described in these beautiful words of the Holy Ghost: *In the streets I have shed a sweet odor* of my modesty, *and as the most delicious myrrh I gave forth the sweetest perfumes*,[1] by the custody of my eyes and the mortification of my senses. We are become a spectacle to the world, to angels and men,[2] says St. Paul, but above all to God. Since eyes so noble are continually fixed on us, it is but just that we strive to present a spectacle worthy of them.

[1] Eccles. xxiv. 20. [2] Cor. iv. 9.

Let your modesty be known to all men, for the Lord is nigh,[1] who regards you ; He will demand of you an account of your gestures at the judgment day which is approaching : let the remembrance then of His Sacred Presence keep you in propriety, and regulate your whole deportment.

After the examples of the Saints which have been cited, and upon which we should form ourselves, I will add two still stronger examples which ought above all others to excite us powerfully to practice this virtue. The first is that of the Blessed Virgin, who was so perfectly modest, whose exterior was regulated with so much wisdom and order, that, during her whole life there never was anything in her words, looks or actions that could infringe in the slightest degree on the most strict propriety ; so that according to St. Ignatius the martyr, all desired to see her as a divine prodigy of modesty and sanctity. The second example is still more transcendent ; it is that of her Son Our Lord, who having possessed all virtues in the highest perfection possessed modesty with all its excellencies and all its charms, to such a degree that no mind, human or angelic, could conceive what the modesty of Our Lord was. St. Paul was so ravished with it, that desirous of obtaining something of the Corinthians he besought them *by the modesty of Jesus Christ.*[2] Let us take this divine modesty for our model, since He has practised it to give us an example ; let us form to ourselves great ideas of the perfection of His deportment ; let us keep our eyes fixed on this divine image till *Christ be formed in us.*[3]

[3] Phil. iv. 5. [1] II. Cor. x. 1. [2] Gal. iv. 19.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LOVE OF OUR LORD MAKES THE LOVING SOUL ADVANCE IN VIRTUE.

I. Those who love advance in virtue.—II. Because they are animated with an active spirit.—III. They know the importance of salvation.— IV. They know they have only this life.—V. They know that if they advance not they must recede.

The excellence of charity is so great, its empire so vast, that it reigns over all parts of justice. Not content with exercising the acts which are proper to it, it puts in motion all the other virtues and excites them to bear fruit. It is a beautiful tree whose branches are all the virtues and whose fruits are all good works. The branches of a tree, says St. Gregory, have life only from the root. Thus all virtues are engendered and nourished by charity. In the famous passage of St. Paul, in which he says, "Charity is patient, charity is kind, envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, believeth all things, hopeth all things," etc., the Apostle did not mean to advance, that patience, goodness and the other virtues are the same thing with charity. He meant, as the Angelic Doctor observes, that charity is of such great utility and endowed with such power that it inflames all the other virtues, excites them to produce their acts by its motive, and consequently adorns them with its splendor and paints them with its colors. As love is the most lively and ardent of the affections, divine love rules the soul: it incites always to action, makes it advance continually in virtue, inclines it to multiply good works incessantly, by the consideration that they increase the glory of Our Lord and are new crowns which adorn His triumph—marks and assurances of the love it bears Him ; and, as regards what is personal

to itself, this soul considers that each virtuous action makes it increase in virtue, and, by consequence, in charity, whether for this life or for the next. The charity of Christ presseth us, says St. Paul, to do always something agreeable to Him, and to advance in virtue. Behold the principal reason of the progress the soul makes in which divine love dwells. But there are other reasons which show us how the just, who hold the first rank among souls touched with the love of Our Lord, increase incessantly in virtue and advance with rapid strides in the paths of perfection. They shall go from virtue to virtue, says David, or as others translate it, from power to power, from riches to riches, from perfection to perfection. His wise son Solomon says: "The way of the just is like the rising sun, which advances and increases to perfect day." Of the Spouse in the Canticles it is asked: "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun?" Three things are to be considered in the movement of the sun and moon: 1, this movement is made in the heavens; 2, with inconceivable rapidity; 3, it never ceases. It is the same with the progress of the just; it is made in the things of heaven, not in the things of earth. There is here no question of advancement in riches and honors, but of greater progress in recollection, in humility, in purity of intention, in lively faith, in firm hope, in ardent charity, in intimate union with God, and all other gifts and virtues. This progress is made with great alacrity. The just walk and run like giants, says David; like harts, says Habacuc; they fly like eagles, according to Isaiah. The comparison the Holy Ghost uses in the text we have above cited, is still more noble. He compares the progress the Spouse makes in virtue to the aurora, to the moon and to the sun: the aurora is beautiful and luminous, the moon is more so, and the sun the most brilliant of all. The just soul, in her first step,

appears like the aurora ; in her second she shines like the moon ; in her third she becomes brilliant as the sun : in three steps she becomes a sun of grace. This is truly the march of a giant, the course of the hart, and the velocity of the eagle. In fine, the progress of the just never ceases ; they march without remissness, like the stars—like the sun, which every day advances one degree ; like the moon, which increases in brilliancy till its whole surface is irradiated. Hence Ecclesiasticus makes the just man say, as some interpret : As the moon in her first quarter reflects the light of the sun, and continues to increase in brilliancy till she is entirely clothed with light, so I acquire each day and each moment new rays of the Son of Justice : I desire ardently to make continual progress in virtue and to attain perfection. Let us now see the reasons which prove this continual progress of the just.

II. First : The Spirit of God which animates them is an active spirit, which will not allow them to rest ; for as God always acts in so excellent and so constant a manner that He is Himself a pure act, His Spirit, being like Him, is also a lively, energetic and active spirit, which continually urges and excites the soul to advance in virtue and to tend towards God. The soul of man, from the moment God draws it out of nothing and places it in the body, animates this body, gives it life, beauty, motion, growth, so that the members, which at first were small, become large, the parts become strong, the whole size increases : so the Spirit of God, grace and charity—which we, with others, regard as the same thing—charity, I say, from the moment it enters the soul, animates it, communicates to it new life and divine beauty. It makes it grow ; it stretches forth the hands to make them operate great things ; it fortifies the feet by conferring more pure, ardent and constant affection for God and the neighbor. It perfects the head by giving it greater elevation of soul, and increased knowledge

of the things of salvation. It strengthens the stomach, and enables it to abandon milk and digest strong food; that is, to suffer things painful to nature. St. Chrysostom observes that the Holy Scripture designates the grace of the Holy Ghost now, fire; again, water—to indicate not its essence, which is simple and spiritual, but the effects it operates on a soul. St. John Baptist said: "He will baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire;" that is, with His grace. And our Lord said to the Samaritan woman: "If thou didst but know the gift of God, and who He is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldst perhaps have asked, and He would give thee living water;" that is, His grace. This grace is called a fire, because, as fire enlightens, heats, burns, consumes, is extremely active, is in perpetual motion, always tends upwards; so grace burns and destroys all sin in a soul; it enlightens the understanding, inflames the will, tends continually towards Heaven, by thoughts, affections, a holy life, and the practice of all virtues. Grace is called water, because it washes the soul and cleanses it of all stains; but it is living water which always flows with rapidity; because, as St. Thomas explains, grace gives the soul a continual inclination to good, and furnishes incessantly new means of attaining it.

III. The second reason which proves the continual progress of the just, is because by the light communicated to them from on high, they know the greatness and infinite importance of the things of salvation, the inestimable treasures of riches, honors, and eternal happiness prepared for them, and which they can so easily acquire. They know they can acquire them only during this life—a period so short that it lasts only a few years, so uncertain that the most robust man cannot promise himself a to-morrow. Knowing all these truths, that each hour, each moment, they can acquire immense merits, they incessantly apply

with all the powers of mind and body to advance, to heap up riches upon riches, merits upon merits, graces upon graces, like an avaricious merchant who allows no opportunity of increasing his wealth to escape him, and who is continually on the look-out for new means of augmenting his revenues. The just know, moreover, their infinite obligations to God our Lord for the innumerable benefits of nature and grace they have received from His bounty, and which this God so liberally and so magnificently daily showers on them. Touched with lively gratitude, they desire, on their side, to render Him new homage, and to grow daily in His love and service.

IV. The third reason is, that they know they are in this life only to increase in virtue. Natural things have small beginnings, as we see in man, animals, and plants; they increase gradually, but incessantly, till they attain their just size and consistency; if they fail to attain their proper development, they are considered defective. In like manner the soul commences to advance in virtue by small steps; but it must always, during this life, continue to make progress; for this life is the time for advancement and growth, as the other life is the time of rest, in which we can gain no more merit, but will enjoy the fruit of the merits we shall have gained here below. The soul should imitate the crocodile, which daily increases in strength and size till its death, while other animals cease to grow at an appointed period.

V. The fourth reason is drawn from a common maxim of the spiritual life established by all who treat of it, especially by the holy Fathers, that not to make profit is to incur loss, and not to advance is to go back. "We can hinder ourselves from lagging behind only by pressing forward," says St. Austin: "when we stop, we begin to descend." This life is a place in which, as Job observes, *man never remains in the same state*, and consequently, if he

becomes not better, he becomes worse ; as a skiff which is working against the current of a river—an apt image of man floating on the waters of this life—necessarily descends if it ceases to ascend. Jacob saw no angels at rest on the mysterious ladder ; all were ascending or descending. The reason is, according to the opinion of many, that man, being obliged to refer all his actions to a good end, cannot do anything indifferent ; all will be good if directed to this end ; all will be bad if not so directed. But though this opinion is not absolutely certain, it is always true that if a merchant loses, through his own fault, any opportunity of increasing his stores, he does not gain as much as he might. Man, who every moment can acquire immense treasures of eternal glory, incurs very great loss if he does not acquire them. Besides, habits of virtue are soon weakened by the cessation of their acts, and still sooner by the production of the contrary acts, which must infallibly destroy the habit.

SECTION I.

IMPORTANT ADVICE TOUCHING THE ACQUISITION OF VIRTUES.

I. We must have a great desire of them.—II. We must practice them courageously.—III. Independently of exterior things.—IV. We must tend to great and solid virtue.—V. Order to be followed.

I. He who wishes to acquire virtue ought in the first place to conceive a great desire of it, and have a firm will, because a great desire and a strong will must do all that is necessary to acquire virtue, and give strength to support all the labors and surmount all the obstacles to be encountered in the acquisition of virtue. *The most proper means*, and the means by which we must begin *to acquire wisdom*,[1]

[1] Sap. vi. 18.

says the Holy Ghost, is to desire it ardently, because wisdom is easily seen by them that love her, and found by them that seek her. She goeth before them that desire her, and showeth herself to them first.[1] Our Lord says, in the Beatitudes, which are the foundations of Christian perfection: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled,[2] because, as St. Austin and St. Thomas have said, the desire renders the soul capable of receiving the things desired. But this desire must be strong and ardent, not weak and cold; it must be a hunger and thirst, because, according to the maxim of philosophers, in all moral things love and desire are the principal cause, the first spring which puts all in motion in such a manner that the ardor with which we ask a thing depends infallibly upon the love and desire we feel for it: if this love and desire be weak, we shall seek it but coldly, and allow ourselves to be repelled by the least difficulty; but if strong and ardent, we do and suffer almost without fatigue or pain the most difficult things that may be necessary to compass our object, because love and a strong desire, joined to a firm hope of obtaining what we wish for, sweetens all; an eager desire to recover health makes bitter medicines taste sweet—hunger makes coarse food palatable. Hunger, says Seneca, renders coarse bread as pleasing as fine bread: the hungry man finds all food good and to his liking. The Holy Ghost had previously said: "A soul that is full shall tread upon the honeycomb: but a soul that is hungry shall take even bitter for sweet."[3] Now this great desire of any virtue we shall resolve to acquire ought to inspire us with a great esteem for it, and the source of this great esteem is found in the necessity, the utility, the excellence of this virtue, and the advantages we hope to reap from it.

II. We must embrace the practice of virtue with courage,

[1] Sap. 13–14. [2] Matt. v. 6. [3] Prov. xxvii. 7.

and instead of being repelled by difficulties, pass them by as though we did not perceive them. What holds us back is want of courage ; we desire virtue, but we are afraid of the costs. We wish to be humble without humiliations, says a pious author, patient without suffering, obedient without constraint, poor without experiencing the pains of poverty, virtuous without labor, penitent without sorrow. St. Gregory elegantly says : "Some people desire to be humble without abasing themselves, or receiving any humiliation. They are content with what they have, provided nothing is wanting to them ; they would be chaste, yet without mortifying their bodies—patient, but without suffering any injury ; but in wishing to acquire virtues without giving themselves any trouble, what do they desire but the glory of a triumph without having sustained the battle ?" This is to desire what is impossible. Virtue is too beautiful and delicious to be had for nothing ; the road leading to it is not strewn with flowers, sprinkled with gold-dust, covered with scarlet, and made redolent of perfume, as were the paths of some emperors ; according to the oracle of truth, it is rough and narrow. The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away, says our Lord. Its very situation demonstrates this ; it is greatly elevated, while hell is beneath us and much nearer to us. God might easily have placed heaven below us and hell above us, but He willed to do otherwise, so show us that in order to go to hell we have only to glide downwards, which is very easily done ; while to reach heaven we must ascend continually, and ascend very high, which cannot be done without much labor and pain. To gain heaven, courage is necessary ; cowardly and effeminate souls cannot reach it ; they succumb at the first difficulties they meet. Hence our Lord, in giving the eight beatitudes as eight great roads which conduct to heaven, always speaks in the masculine, and never in the feminine

gender; blessed (*bienhereux*) are the poor in spirit;[1] blessed are the meek, etc. Not that women who practice true poverty of spirit, and the virtues included in the other seven beatitudes, have no share in the rewards promised, but to show that such women are no longer women in virtue. They are men, because to reach this perfection it was necessary that they should forget the weakness of their sex, that they should cut off their breasts like the Amazons; that is, that they should put away whatever would naturally prevent their bearing arms in the Christian warfare, that they should despoil themselves of all that is effeminate in them, and assume a brave and courageous air. The very word *virtue* shows us this. It means strength, power, which indicates what is to be done to acquire it. Moreover, the word *virtue*, (*vertu*), in French, Latin, and several other languages, is feminine; the word *vice* masculine, as if to show us that when virtue is united to any one it must be to a masculine, firm, and constant heart, while vice needs a loose and cowardly soul. It is in this sense that sinners have been called women, and the pagans themselves, Greeks and Latins, have so designated them.

Whoever then desires to acquire virtue must not be dismayed at the difficulties he must expect to encounter; he should meet them bravely, and surmount them with determined courage. And, in effect, it is but just that he should do so. Does not experience teach us that there is no good on earth to be attained without some trouble? The vinter must cultivate his vines, the reaper must sow his seeds; a merchant for sake of his commerce will go to the extremities of the earth; a soldier to gain a transient glory will face death in the battle-field; and, to use a comparison suitable to us, if we, who are brought up to study, who grow grey over books, have so much trouble, and employ so many years and such great assiduity to gain a slight,

[1] Beati pauperes spiritu. Matt. v. 3, etc.

imperfect knowledge of languages, a knowledge easily forgotten, and often of little importance to our salvation, which indeed, so far from saving us, may only inflate us with pride and thus cause our ruin ; though after all, however great our learning is, it cannot approach the science, of the demons—is it not just that we apply ourselves with more force and more assiduity to acquire virtue, the least degree of which is more valuable than all the sciences, and renders a man richer and greater than all the monarchs of the earth ? St. Dorotheus tells us that he himself was greatly touched with this reason, and that it was to him a continual spur to virtue. "I was," he says, "so ardently attached to study that I could think of nothing else ; so eager was I for it that I forgot to eat ; indeed I cared not what I ate or drank, nor how I was lodged. I took no recreation with others, I ordered my friends to deny me to all visitors ; at table my eye and my heart were with the book I held constantly before me, and after having tasted something, I knew not what, I studied till midnight. When I became a Religious I often recalled the past and said to myself : If I once took so much pains to acquire profane science, if I had such a passion for books, with what ardor ought I now apply to the acquisition of virtue ? I declare," he concludes, "this thought was very profitable to me and made a very strong impression on my mind." We must not think it strange that virtue is found only on the mountain top, that it is a rose surrounded with thorns, a pearl hidden in an oyster ; this is but reasonable. Let us then cheerfully embrace all the means requisite to obtain so precious a treasure, how painful soever they may be ; let us not heed the resistance of the inferior part, nor listen to the complaints of nature.

III. In the practice of virtue we must, as far as possible, render ourselves independent of exterior things. There are some persons so tender and sensitive that the least

accident troubles and retards them : in order to practice virtue a certain place, time, dwelling, employment, and certain chosen companions, are necessary to them ; if circumstanced otherwise than as they desire, they lose their courage and peace of mind. We must free ourselves from this servitude, and make ourselves as far as possible independent of these little things ; the more disengaged the soul is the stronger and nobler it becomes ; it even becomes divine because it acts like God, who in His operations does not depend on any thing ; it becomes more noble because it depends not on circumstances, stronger because it brings its own powers more into action ; it acts with fewer means, because time, place and other accidents contribute nothing to its actions. I mean so far as it is possible to be independent of these things, for I speak not here of means absolutely required by the necessity of our nature, as eating, sleeping, etc., but I speak of such as we render necessary to ourselves by our laziness and weakness of spirit ; an infant needs many little succors with which he can easily dispense when he shall have become large and robust.

I refer to this human respect which torments many and turns them from performing a multitude of good works ; they are uneasy as to what will be said or thought of them ; they fear they might pass for devotees if they perform some virtuous action before men ; for simple-minded if they practise some humiliation ; for scrupulous if they are faithful to little things ; for sad and melancholy if they be recollected and reserved. Whoever desires to be virtuous must trample on human respect. The first work of the true philosopher, says Epictitus, is to reject common opinions, and to be careless as to what is said or thought about him, so long as he does right : he must rid himself of these cowardly apprehensions and vain fears of being despised or put to confusion before men. And when na-

ture to dissuade you from doing right shall suggest to you these unfortunate words which have placed a barrier to the zeal of so many: what will be thought of me, what will be said of me if I do this?—stifle this movement and say: Rather what will my good angel think and say of me? and what is of still more consequence what will God think and say of me? Now I should certainly make more account of the judgment of God, who is infinitely wise and just, than of the judgment of men. I shall be despised on earth, you say? well be it so, (though it will not be so among persons whose opinions are of value,) but I shall acquire great glory in heaven. *I am not ashamed of the Gospel*,[1] said St. Paul, and every Christian ought to say the same; I am not ashamed to publish its truths and its holy counsels: If I were ashamed of it, Jesus Christ would be ashamed of me on the judgment day, as He Himself assures me. And indeed, how could one be ashamed of a thing so glorious? Virtue never dishonors him who practises it; it is vice that does this; virtue and glory are sisters, they always go together, as vice and infamy are inseparable. The Cross is not an opprobrium to the faithful, says St. Austin, but a triumph. To the Jews it was a stumbling block and to the Gentiles foolishness, but to souls elevated in sanctity it is a treasure, a source of glory, the masterpiece of an infinite wisdom; hence we mark it on our foreheads, as the place most seen by men. Far from blushing at the Cross, says the same St. Austin, I sign it on my forehead, on the seat of modesty and shame, because the Christian ought not to blush to believe and imitate the humiliations of Christ. For me it is a small thing to be judged by you or by any man's days; He that judgeth me is the Lord, Him alone I wish to please.

Moreover, he who desires to acquire virtue ought not to suffer himself to be dismayed by the bad example of

[1] Cor. iv. 3.

others, which so often becomes a stumbling block and a rock of scandal to the weak. We should do nothing calculated to disedify our neighbor, but if our neighbor should act in a manner calculated to disedify us, we should take care not to allow ourselves to be injured by his conduct. Be blind, says Cassian, to things that are disedifying, lest influenced by the authority of those who do them, and who may be remarkable for age, office, or learning, you may commit yourself what you condemned in others. If you hear detraction, if words ill becoming to a Christian be uttered in your presence, strive to become deaf, or at least act as though you had not heard them. St. Eucherius writes to his cousin Valerian these remarkable words: "Let not the tepid or negligent find imitators in us; let us not suffer ourselves to be seduced by the errors of others to the prejudice of our salvation; if others err, it will be no excuse for us on the judgment day, since we shall each be judged for our own actions, not for the actions of others. I beseech you to regard the sins of others as an opprobrium, not as an example; as something from which you should fly, and not imitate." In the practice of virtue we must be guided not by example, but by reason. Each has to save himself. If he fail in this, he must suffer the consequences. Do not imitate in his sin, as you would not follow him if you saw him leap into a precipice.

IV. We must tend to virtue, and to great and solid virtue, and strive to practise it excellently. As regards the solidity of virtue, it often happens that we take the shadow for the reality. It is easy to mistake vice for virtue, says St. Basil. The pagans themselves observed that vice and virtue were so close to each other that their gates met, and that sometimes he who imagined he struck at the door of a virtue knocked at the door of the neighboring vice, which opened to him; deceived by the resemblance, he entered, misfortunes and falls soon showed him his error

and he learned to his cost that he had not even stood on the door-step of virtue. There are three errors very common with regard to true virtue. The first is that of those who content themselves with the knowledge and consideration of virtue without going further, who give no attention to the difference existing between theory and practise, and seem ignorant of the fact that true virtue is not acquired by speculation, but by exercise. If one do not practice the actions of justice and temperance, said Aristotle, he shall never become just and temperate, whatever knowledge he may have of these virtues, however eloquently he may discourse on them ; yet there are many who persuade themselves of the contrary, like those sick people who imagine they will be cured provided they listen attentively to the prescriptions of their physicians without taking any trouble to execute them. But as invalids who act thus never recover their bodily health, so those who take speculation for practice in what regards virtue will never obtain spiritual health, and will always remain vicious. It is not enough to think and speak about virtue, we must come to practice it. To become virtuous it is not sufficient to know in what virtue consists—we must produce acts of virtue. The second error is that of those who pass from the knowledge of virtue to affection and love for it, but who rest there ; they deceive themselves, not distinguishing between love of virtue and virtue itself, which is a great mistake ; for it is very easy to love humility, obedience, and mortification, but to exercise them is difficult, because of the repugnance nature experiences in their practice—a repugnance which is never felt by those who pass not beyond the knowledge or love of a virtue. The third error is that of those who embrace the practice of virtue, but rest in the sensible sweetness God communicates to them, which is only an accident of virtue, not its substance, and is given only to sweeten the bitterness of its exercise ; this

is to act like sickly children who, when some bread and jam is given them, eat the jam and leave the bread. Guarding against these three errors, we must aim at solid virtue, practising its true acts in the most excellent manner we can, and with purity of intention.

There are three degrees of each virtue, as Aristotle teaches: the first is called *continence;* it consists in producing acts of some particular virtue, but producing them with difficulty because of the resistance of the sensual appetite, which is not yet fully subjugated to reason. The second is called *perfect virtue*, when reason, victorious over the sensual appetite, exercises virtue perfectly and with pleasure. The third is called *divine* or *heroic* virtue, when the acts of virtue are produced in a degree of perfection surpassing the ordinary force of man. These different degrees come from the fact that man holds the medium rank between two creatures; the beast which is beneath him and which he resembles in his animal propensities, and the angel who is above him, and whom he resembles by his reason. When in the practice of virtue, man combats the sensual appetite and surmounts it, he is continent; when he practises virtue above the ordinary standard, he is heroic; when he holds the middle rank between these degrees, he is perfectly virtuous. St. Thomas teaches, after the doctrine of Plotinus, that the same virtues are called sometimes *exemplary*, sometimes *politic*, sometimes *purifying*, and, finally, virtues of a *purified spirit*—first, *exemplary*, because being found in God in the highest perfection, they serve as a model for those men which should practice; men afterwards practising them suitably to their nature, which is to be social, they are then called *politic;* afterwards purifying, because they purify the soul from its stains, elevate it above the common standard, and incline it to tend to the divine resemblance; in fine, the last virtues are those

of souls who have acquired this divine resemblance, and who practise virtue without contradiction from the sensual appetite, in perfect unity of mind and body, and with tranquility and pleasure.

We should not content ourselves with weak, puerile virtue, but aim at the highest sanctity. Be zealous for the better gifts, says St. Paul, excite yourself to practise what is most excellent in virtue. Plato relates that Alcibiades had so aspiring a soul that he would rather die than not aim at the highest things ; he never rested where he was, his thoughts were continually ascending. Dionysius Chrysostom says the same of Alexander : not being satisfied with his empire in Europe, Asia and Africa, he desired to rule the whole universe. We ought to have a similar ambition for virtue, always aspiring to its highest degrees ; we ought to seek to perfect ourselves in all circumstances. Be perfect in consolations, perfect in afflictions : if you be a novice, be a perfect novice ; if you be a Religious, be a perfect Religious ; if you be in the world, live as one called by God to sanctify yourself in the world, and practise all the virtues proper to your vocation. Perfection is exacted of all, says St. Bernard, but not equally ; if you begin, begin perfectly ; if you advance, advance perfectly ; if you have acquired some degrees of perfection, live according to the laws of perfection, and say with the Apostle : One thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind and stretching out to those before me ; I press forward to the mark of the supernal vocation to which God has called me by Christ ; regarding only what is before you, advance with outstretched hands to seize the palm presented to you. And are we not obliged to do so, since we serve so powerful a Monarch, before whose majesty all the duty we can pay Him, all the homages we can render Him, are infinitely beneath what He merits? We should do it because we are children of such a Father, and are obliged to

imitate Him, since He has said: Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. The virtues of Christianity, included in the eight beatitudes taught on the Mount, oblige us to ascend on high and not remain in the valleys. One generous act of virtue is more pleasing to God, more meritorious to man, more potent to confer the habit of virtue, than many small acts. An archer always aims above the mark; the merchant asks more for his merchandise than he expects to obtain: to attain to great things we must have great courage and great resolution.

V. The last advice is an epitome of all necessary to be done in order to acquire a virtue: 1. We must know well in what this virtue consists, what its acts interior and exterior are. 2. We must earnestly beg it of God, offering for this intention our communions and penances, begging the intercession of the Holy Virgin and the Saints to whom we are most devoted, and especially those who have excelled in this virtue; in short, we should direct all our exercises to this end. But it must be remembered, as St. Dorotheus wisely observes, that to ask of God a virtue is to ask of Him occasions of practising it; for example, whoever asks humility asks God to send him some one to contemn and humble him; when he shall have obtained this favor, he must despise himself that he may be humbled exteriorly by him whom God has sent to humble him, and interiorly by himself. Moreover, when God sends us occasions of practising virtue we must be careful not to let them escape us; we must carefully improve them; we must consider every such occasion as a mine of gold, a decisive stroke, an opportunity of acquiring glory, a crisis which shows whether we have a real desire of perfection; for it is in these circumstances, especially if they be rare or difficult, that our progress appears. Hence we should strive to render our acts of virtue as glorious to God and meritorious to ourselves as they can possibly be. 3. We

must meditate often and even daily on this virtue, choosing meditations proper to the subject and considering the excellent examples Our Lord, the Holy Virgin and the Saints have left us on this point ; we must also make our spiritual lecture on the same subject. 4. We must daily produce some interior or exterior act of this virtue : in the evening examine how we have practised it, at the end of the week examine the progress we have made in it : we should resolve to perform a certain number of these acts before dinner, and a certain number after, not that we should not exceed this number when we can, but that we should, at least, avoid falling short of it. 5. We must make our particular examen on this virtue, or on the opposite vice, that we may realize more fully the beauty and importance of this virtue.

VI. Finally, we must not easily undertake the acquisition of other virtues or give ourselves to other exercises, except that of the presence of God, of conformity to His will, of purity of intention, which we should never neglect because they are the foundations of the spiritual life, but we must reserve our chief efforts for the virtue we are laboring to attain. Using these means it will be impossible not to make some progress in virtue, and not to gain at least some few victories.

SECTION II.

ALL CAN ACQUIRE VIRTUES IN A HIGH DEGREE AND BECOME PERFECT, BY CO-OPERATING WITH GRACE.

I. Because God ardently desires to communicate Himself to us.—II. But according to our disposition.—III. Few co-operate with the graces of God.

It is a subject of great consolation to think that if we will we can all become perfect, practise virtue in an emi-

nent degree, and acquire immense treasures of merits and graces. Open thy mouth and I will fill it, says God by David; open thy heart and I will replenish it with my gifts. God desires only to enrich us: I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh, says He by one of His prophets, on the great and the small, the old and the young, on My servants and upon My handmaids. He says not: I will give it, drop by drop, but I will *pour* it out, to show the plenteousness of this effusion. God being good, and infinitely good, has an infinite inclination to communicate Himself, as He clearly shows, both within Himself and outside of Himself. For, as St. Thomas observes, intelligences can have only two operations within themselves, to understand and to will; God, the first of all intelligences, gives Himself within Himself entirely to His Son by the way of the understanding, and entirely to the Holy Ghost by that of the will; outside Himself He has given Himself entirely to the Sacred Humanity in the mystery of the Incarnation, and by the Incarnation to all men in general, and even to all creatures, and in the mystery of the Eucharist He gives Himself to each person in particular. He desires nothing so much as to communicate Himself to us and make us experience the effects of His liberality. Open to Me, My sister, My friend, My dove, My undefiled one; for My head is full of dew and My locks of the drops of the night, said Our Lord to the Spouse; My head is full of the graces I have merited for thee in the night of My Passion, and which I desire to shower on thee. And to show how intense this desire is, He uses the sweetest and tenderest words to induce her to open to Him the door of her heart. The holy man, Balthasar Alvarez, having done a good work one day, saw during his prayer, on the following morning, Our Lord heavily laden with goods and almost sinking under the burden, showing the greatest desire to be eased of it, but yet retaining it, because no one asked

to share His treasures. It is true then that God desires ardently to communicate Himself to us, to give us abundantly of His favors and graces, in order to render us holy and perfect ; because if this is our advantage, it is also His glory, for He wishes we should imitate Him as children imitate their Father, and He has commanded us to love Him with our whole heart, our whole soul, with all our mind and with all our strength, and to live in such great purity as to avoid all willful sin. Now, we cannot accomplish all His commands without becoming very virtuous and elevating ourselves to high perfection ; this, however, we can do, since we are bound to do so by an express command, and the commandments oblige only to what is possible : consequently God gives us all that is requisite for their perfect observance.

II. Though it be true that God desires to communicate to us His gifts, He wishes, nevertheless, that we should on our part do something towards putting ourselves in a state to receive them. Open thy mouth, says He, and I will fill it ; I will fill it, but you must first open it, I am thy door : my head is full of the dews of My grace, but thou must open to Me, otherwise I shall not enter. The Angelic Doctor says of charity, and it is the same with all other gifts, God gives it and man receives it : God, who is infinitely rich, gives without impoverishing Himself ; He is infinitely liberal, therefore He gives, and gives effectually ; but as causes, however powerful in themselves, act not on subjects unless they find them prepared, so God is always ready to give, but He gives efficaciously only to him who is prepared to receive ; and as He is the Sovereign Goodness, He is always ready to give, so far as He Himself is concerned, and to give with infinite profusion. But as what is received is received according to the capacity of the receiver, God bestows favors and graces on man only in proportion as man is prepared to receive them, and

man's disposition to receive them is no other thing than the tending of his soul to God by the virtuous actions of his understanding and will. Such is the doctrine of St. Thomas. And the Holy Council of Trent has defined it by saying that each one receives grace, not according to the measure of the good pleasure of God, but according to his disposition and co-operation. God puts no limits to His magnificence, says St. Jerome, but He is constrained to give the precious liquor of His grace according to the size of the vases presented to receive it ; He gives as much as they can contain. St. Denis says very well on this subject : The inequality of the dispositions of souls is the cause why the light that proceeds from God, and shines equally on all His creatures, does not equally enlighten all, because all have not the same capacity to reflect it ; some resist it, others receive but an obscure participation, others receive a larger portion, it is given according to the capacity of the receiver. Divine virtue penetrates freely everywhere, it is invisible but it shows itself according to the disposition of those who receive it. The sun's ray issuing from its focus easily penetrates the celestial matter nearest to it, because being perfectly transparent it is perfectly capable of receiving his light, but when his rays strike on opaque bodies, the light is clouded and sombre in proportion to the opacity of the body. Fire communicates itself more readily to ignitable matter, than to matter whose qualities render them incapable of being ignited, or which are only slightly inflammable. The brilliant sun which is the visible image of the sovereign Good, communicates its brightness to anything capable of receiving it ; this wonderful light irradiates the visible world by the splendor of its rays ; if there be any object that does not receive them, this is not to be attributed to the weakness of their light but to the little disposition it has to be enlightened, for it often happens that the ray passes beyond

it, darting over many obstacles to illumine objects more distant; there is nothing in the visible world which may not reflect its rays. Many impressions of a seal retain the form of the original seal, but not all in the same way; this is not the fault of the seal, but of the matter on which it is impressed; if the matter be soft, if it be compact, if it have not already the mark of another figure, if it be neither too solid nor too liquid, it is sure to take the impression in a clear, neat, well defined and durable manner; if it be defective in these things it will not take a good impression; but this is not the fault of the seal but of the matter to which it is applied.

We may conclude from all this that man receives grace according to his capacity, that God desires to give plentifully, but that He proportions His gifts to the measure of our dispositions. David says: Lord, *Thou art generous with the generous*, who run to Thee with ardor; but those who are niggardly with Thee shall be treated as they deserve. With the holy Thou art holy, says St. Bernard, and therefore Thou art loving with the loving, and full of solicitude for those who come to Thee eagerly and ardently. *I love them that love Me*, says God, *and them that seek Me find Me.* He assures you not only of His affection but also of His solicitude and care, if He see that you think of Him. He will hear you if you hear Him, He will speak to you if you speak to Him, but if you do not address Him a word you impose silence on Him. The miraculous oil of the Prophet Eliseus flowed so long as there were empty vessels to receive it. In proportion as we dilate our hearts the goodness of God is always flowing into them, but if we shut or contract them, we constrain Him to diminish His bounty. Speaking of the prayer of quiet, St. Teresa says: "Many souls reach it but few go beyond it, and I know not why; but I know that the defect comes not from God, for since He aids us and gives us grace to practice it, I believe He

would not fail to lead us still higher if we did not put some obstacles."

III. There are few men, (or rather there is not one) said St. Ignatius, who comprehend perfectly how much they oppose the excellent things God wills to do in them, and the signal graces He designs to communicate to them; few of us can imagine the heights to which He would raise us if we allowed Him to act as He pleases with us, and never resisted His will. There is a remarkable passage on this subject in the Life of Blessed Angela of Foligno. Our Lord one day said to her: "Thou hast besought My servant Francis, hoping by his merits and intercession to obtain the accomplishment of thy desires, and as he has loved Me perfectly I have distributed to him very abundantly My graces; but if there be in the world any person who loves Me more I should accord him still greater testimonies of My good will. He said to me, too," proceeds the Saint, "that there are few who really love virtue, that faith is become weak among men, and He added sadly: The love I bear to a soul that loves Me is so great that if there were now any one who loved Me with his whole heart, and as much as is possible to human nature, I would bestow on him more goods and favors than I ever bestowed on the Saints who have received such benefits from My hands; and no one can say that he is incapable of burning with this love. All can truly love God if they wish to do so. He complained bitterly that though He desired nothing so much as to bestow His graces, He found few capable of receiving them, because the hearts of men were as land which had not been ploughed for a long time, and which remained fallow, and bore no fruit." God wishes to bestow His favors, He complains that men will not receive them; the limits of his favors come not from the limits of His liberality which indeed has no limits, but from the limits of our dispositions according to the

measure of which He communicates Himself. If the quantity of water in a small vessel is insignificant, it is not the fault of the fountain, which is great and inexhaustible, but of the littleness of the vase which will contain no more. If the sun does not fully enlighten a chamber exposed to his rays, the fault is not his ; the deficiency of the light must be attributed to the smallness of the window which admits only two or three rays. If the window be large enough to admit his light to pass in freely, he will irradiate the whole chamber ; if he cannot enter he will shine outside on the walls and doors. Hence *open your mouth and God will fill it* with His sweetness : let us enlarge our hearts and He will shower His mercies upon us ; let us put no obstacle to the infusion of His graces and He will pour them abundantly on our souls, and, in order to receive these celestial goods let us bring the preparation and co-operation He demands of us.

SECTION III.

CONTINUATION.

I. Graces are given unequally.—II. God gives enough to each.—III Words of St. Bernard.

Our advancement in virtue and perfection depends then on our preparation, and our co-operation with grace ; so that he who best disposes himself to receive it, and corresponds most faithfully with it, becomes, whatever may be his calling, most virtuous, most perfect and most holy. Hence the great inequality of virtue among Religious, and hence the reason why some seculars may surpass some Religious in sanctity. Be ashamed, O Sidon, saith the sea : the sea represents the instable life of seculars, and the city of Sidon the tranquility and repose of Religious.

St. Gregory explaining this text says : Some Religious may well blush to see the lives of some seculars, who observe with much exactitude many things to which they are not obliged, while these Religious transgress after having solemnly promised by vow to be faithful to God.

The lizard *(stellio)* crawls on the earth, and dwelleth in king's houses. Very often, says the same Father, explaining these words, birds to which God has given wings to fly to the most elevated places, fly very low, and build their nests on thorns ; while lizards, which have but feet, make their way to the turrets of royal castles. In like manner some Religious, endowed with great qualities, enriched with gifts of God which might become as wings to enable them to fly to Him, grovel on earth, because they will not co-operate with His graces ; while many simple persons, by co-operating with the few graces given them, attain high perfection, and are admitted to the familiarity of the King of heaven ; because, as the Prince of the Apostles says, there is no exception of persons ; God gives Himself to each according as each proves himself worthy ; and as his communication of Himself is always great and abundant, if we correspond to it, we shall certainly become very perfect.

I. It is true that St. Paul says, grace is given to each of us according to the measure of the giving of Christ ; for as it is a grace and not a merit, He gives it when, where and how He pleases, without wronging any one, since He gives only what is his own. It is farther true that grace is unequally bestowed, that there is a certain measure for each, larger for some, smaller for others ; for if God does all with number, weight and measure, as the Sage says, we cannot doubt but that He observes the same order in the distribution of the most precious of His gifts which is His grace ; and then, as there are many mansions in the house of the heavenly Father, there must be here below

different degrees of grace for the just ; for there is necessarily a certain reference between grace and glory, since grace is glory commenced, and glory is grace perfected. We know that however great our efforts, we could never obtain as much glory as the Holy Virgin, nor could we without presumption promise ourselves as much as the Apostles who, as St. Paul says, received the first fruits of the Holy Spirit, that is, as St. Thomas explains, they received the Holy Ghost more abundantly than did the other Saints to whom they ought to be preferred, how great soever the merits of those Saints may be, whether as virgins, martyrs or doctors. As there is not here question of the Blessed Virgin, I believe that in excepting her we may also except her Spouse St. Joseph, and St John Baptist.

Though all this be true, yet God never fails to give to every Christian, and still more to every Religious, grace enough to render him very virtuous and very perfect, if he use it rightly. Certainly the grace of God is not wanting to us, but we fail to co-operate with it; we have means enough if we choose to make a good use of them. God prepares for us a very rich crown, and we are satisfied with one less beautiful ; He wishes to elevate us to very high perfection, and we content ourselves with mediocre virtue. And it rarely or never happens that a soul attains the degree of perfection to which God had destined it, and which it could attain by using well the graces bestowed on it ; but it rejects some, renders others unfruitful, and does not fully correspond to the rest. More ; the sins we commit are only a want of correspondence to the assistance God gives us ; because as the grace of God is absolutely necessary to enable us to avoid evil and do good, so if God failed to give us this grace when necessary, the avoidance of evil and the doing of good would be impossibilities, which we should not be able to attempt, and the neglect of hich could not therefore render us culpable. Now, as

we commit many sins, we consequently fail in fidelity to grace, and deprive ourselves of the degrees of virtue to which God had designed to raise us, and to which He would raise us if we had done our part.

The important point then is to employ well the graces of God, to be attentive to the voice of God speaking within us, and to follow the movements of His grace. Is it not just that we should co-operate with God since he labors for our salvation? Ought we not to do something towards it, since grace will not do all? There needs but a bold and generous stroke, an heroic act of virtue to make a man pleasing to God, to secure his salvation, to render him holy: this is what happened to Abraham when, by his obedience, by the memorable victory he gained over himself, he was about to immolate his son, God said to him by His angel: "I have sworn by My own self that since thou hast done this thing, and hast not spared thy only begotten son for My sake: I will bless thee and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is by the sea-shore: thy seed shall possess the gates of their enemies. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice."[1]

III. I will finish with the famous words which St. Bernard spoke on this subject to his monks: You all know well the way by which you should walk, and how you should walk in it, but all have not the same will and the same ardor: some run, or rather fly, in this way; the longest vigils seem short to them; the coarsest food delicious, the roughest garments too delicate; labor not only endurable but sweet; others walk in a cowardly way, with an arid heart and a rebellious will; and ere long, they will have to be urged to the observance of rule by the fear of hell. There are several here who eat the same bread

[1] Gen. xxii. 16.

with us, who sleep, who sing with us, who share our labors, but who are truly miserable and deserving of pity. They are the companions of our labors and pains, but they share not our joys and consolations. Is then the arm of the Lord shortened? Does He not give to all, He who is so good, who, as the Prophet says, openeth His hand and filleth every creature with blessing? What is the cause of this misfortune? It is because they are not entirely given to God, they are not void of self, they are filled with passions and attached to creatures. And thus disposed they succumb under the burden of this tyranny; they live as in a hell, unable to enjoy the happy effects of the mercies of God, or breathe the sweet air of liberty of spirit which alone renders the yoke sweet and the burden light. This unhappy state of difficulty and anguish in the service of God and the acquisition of virtue, comes from this, that their will is not sufficiently purified and disengaged from sublunary things; they embrace not good when they recognize it; they love and seek the little consolations of sense, in words, in looks and otherwise. If sometimes they abstain from them it is only for a little while; if they burst the bonds that hold them captive they soon fasten them again; if they put aside the obstacles to the unction of the Holy Spirit, they soon raise new ones in their stead. Now, it is certain that a soul cannot receive the gifts of God while it cherishes instead of removing the obstacles. If these were removed it would soon be replenished with His graces; if it were entirely disengaged it would receive great gifts; if it be only partially disengaged, it will receive but small gifts. It is true that nature will suffer in the beginning; your heart will be full of sadness, but if you persevere your labors will procure you great tranquility of spirit; your sorrow shall be changed into joy; for then your affections will be purified, you will be renewed or

rather changed, what you found difficult and even impossible in the beginning, will afterwards become sweet and easy.[1]

SECTION IV.

SIGNS BY WHICH TO DISCERN WHETHER WE HAVE ACQUIRED A VIRTUE.

I. By the effects.—II. When we have vanquished the contrary vice—III. When we practise virtue with pleasure and facility.

Thus should we co-operate with divine grace, thus should we labor to acquire virtue. Let us now see the marks by which we may know whether we possess it or not; let us test our gold and see whether it be mingled with any alloy. Experience teaches us that, constituted as we are in this life where we gain our knowledge of things only through the senses, we cannot know spiritual things, as virtues, in themselves, nor can we know whether we possess them or not, unless by their sensible effects. Things hidden in our souls are discovered only by experience; by a knowledge of the productions and the effects, we arrive at the principle and the cause; by the brook we can ascend to the source: this is what St. Paul means by these words: We have not received the spirit of the *world but the spirit of God*,[2] that we may know the interior graces and gifts God has given us. He adds: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I judged as a child, but when I became a man I put away the things of a child."[3] Since one shows by his conduct whether he is a wise man or a child, it is by his actions we see whether he is virtuous or vicious, whether he possess any particular virtue or is destitute of it.

I. The first mark to discern whether we have acquired the virtue of temperance, humility or obedience, is to con-

[1] Serm. de Ascen. [2] 1 Cor. ii. 12. [3] 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

sider whether we do the works of it interiorly and exteriorly. Virtue is not like those trees called flower-bearers, which produce an immense quantity of leaves and flowers, but no fruit. Virtue is a fruit-bearing tree. The Angelic Doctor teaches, and it is the universal opinion, that virtue is an effective habit which tends to execution. Aristotle defines it : the disposition of a good thing to a very good thing, that is, a quality which excites the faculty in which it resides to produce its acts according to the highest perfection of being, because a thing has perfection only inasmuch as it has actual being : hence God is perfection itself and a pure act ; and hence St. Thomas often repeats that everything is made for the operation proper to it, as for the interior end which perfects it. Hence it may be concluded that whoever does not practise temperance, obedience, humility, has not the habit of these virtues, for if he had he would certainly produce their acts. Even if, having acquired the habit, he cease to produce the acts, this cessation is, in the opinion of the doctors, more than sufficient, directly or indirectly, to destroy the habit ; because, as St. Thomas says, everything preserves itself by the causes which have given it being ; and as acts of temperance, obedience and humility have conferred the habit of these virtues on the soul, it is essential that similar acts preserve it, otherwise it will soon be lost : if we cease to supply wood to the fire, the fire must quickly go out. Moreover, if the habit of virtue be not sustained by exercise, the passions which are not extinct will soon excite the soul to vicious actions thereby ruining the habit, which cannot long survive ; and infused virtues as well as acquired virtues may be destroyed in this manner.

II. The second test is, when the virtue has passed through severe trials and was victorious over the contrary vice; as when humility has been tried by temptations to pride, by confusion and by contempt : patience by tempta-

tions to anger, by sufferings and contradictions ; poverty by want of necessary things ; obedience by orders contrary to our sentiments, etc., for it is a general principle with regard to moral virtues that virtue which is untried is not a virtue, or at least is but the shadow of a virtue. How can I know whether you have courage to support poverty if you revel in riches, whether you can endure ignominy and contempt patiently if you have never known anything but esteem and applause, with what constancy you will support the loss of your children if they are in robust health and strength? You may indeed be virtuous, but this is to be judged by effects ; it is the occasion which shows it. A soldier does not acquire the reputation of being valiant by wearing a fine sword, but by using it bravely to defend himself and attack the enemy. We may conclude hence that there are few virtues among men, for the greater number surrender at the first attack, and know not how to bear up under the least shock or disappointment. We see many who are mild and tranquil so long as nothing occurs to annoy them, who obey when they are commanded to do what is pleasing to them ; who are humble in words and practise certain exterior humiliations, but if you touch them in a sensible part, they are all in disorder ; like those dead waters which have a beautiful, even and uniform surface, and emit no bad odor ; but if you agitate them you will soon see muddy water and inhale a disagreeable odor. Perfumes never give out their odors more perfectly than when they are shaken, or burned. The fruits that grow on the shores of the Dead Sea are beautiful to the eye, but crumble into ashes as soon as they are touched.

We know an empty vessel by the sound, if the sound be strong and sharp, the vessel is empty, if it be inaudible or dull, the vessel is full or nearly so ; in like manner the truly virtuous is silent under trials, while the soul which

is virtuous only in appearance makes much noise. For the rest, occasions of practising virtue will never fail us ; if we wish to practise poverty or temperance, for instance, we are always either in want or abundance ; if we be in want, the occasion is ready made, a noble and generous soul will turn it to advantage. St. Francis Xavier thus describes the confidence he had in God in Japan among a barbarous people whose language he understood not : "As we have around us only infidels and barbarians, enemies of the true religion, we enjoy this advantage that we have none on whom to ground our hopes but God alone. And I will tell you what experience teaches me, that it is a very different thing to be separated from human succors in reality and to be separated from them only in thought. In places where Jesus Christ is known for what He is, that is, as God, the Sovereign Lord of all things, the sight of creatures and of ordinary things, as parents, friends, home, the commodities of life, the remedies against sickness, all form a rampart around the human heart, and hinder it from feeling God in the midst of so many objects, so that it leans on Him and attaches itself to Him only in speculation. But situated as I now am—far from home, from friends, from country, in another world, among persons who understand not our language, at the mercy of their cruel passions, without any hope of aid from any human being—I am necessitated to rest on God with all the ardor my soul is capable of." If we be in abundance we can exercise poverty and temperance if we please, and even in a manner more excellent than in the contrary state, because it is certainly more difficult to preserve true poverty of spirit in riches than in indigence. It is more difficult to be abstemious if our table be charged with choice viands than if we have only bread and water ; because the presence of the objects, as philosophers teach, and as reason and experience demonstrate, puts in motion the sensual ap-

petite which lay dormant during their absence. So that to produce acts of virtue in this situation, and to gain the victory over enemies that attack us on all sides, we must practise greater self-denial, and make greater efforts to conquer.

III. The third mark is when we exercise virtue with facility and pleasure, provided this facility and pleasure proceed from the faculty which acts, aided by the habit of virtue and a common grace, and not by an extraordinary and sensible grace, which God often gives even to beginners, and which so ravishes them that they feel no difficulty in performing acts of virtue, even the most painful. When we fulfil the duties a virtue imposes, with a joy which flows from this source, it is an infallible sign that we possess it. This is the doctrine of all philosophers, which Aristotle, their head, laid down in the Second Book of his *Morals*, where he says that we may know whether or not we have acquired a virtue by the pleasure or displeasure we feel in exercising its acts. He illustrates this by two examples, one of the virtue of temperance, the other that of fortitude; for he who abstains from luxuries and takes pleasure in depriving himself of them, is certainly temperate; but whoever does this with difficulty and aversion, cannot be considered temperate. He who confronts danger with gaiety and courage, deserves to be considered valiant and courageous; he who faces it with fear and trembling, deserves to pass for a coward. St. Thomas gives the reason of this when he says: The first acts of virtue are the victory over the obstacles which rise up against it; by subduing the passions which form these obstacles, we smooth the way for the following acts; afterwards we perform them without difficulty and with joy; because virtue being in itself very beautiful and conformable to reason, cannot fail to be pleasing to us if it find no resistance on the part of our corrupt nature." If, then, we

find joy and facility in the practice of virtue we may be sure that we have acquired it.

We may add here something very astonishing and very deplorable, which is, that among persons who profess piety, and even among religious, there are found men who after ten or twenty years find more difficulty in obeying not only in great but even in little things, in humbling themselves, in practising recollection, who are more violent in their passions, more attached to their ease and conveniences than they were in the beginning, or during their novitiate. What is the cause of this sad misfortune? What have their mental and vocal prayer, their acts of poverty, humility and other virtues produced in them? Instead of having acquired peace of mind, the liberty of the children of God, facility and joy in good works, tasting and experiencing the truth of these words of Our Lord, "My yoke is sweet and My burden light," they find this yoke bitter, this burden heavy. It must be admitted, first, that they have not profited in virtue, since, as we have said, in proportion as virtues advance towards perfection, difficulties diminish and facility increases; second, that they have not performed true acts of obedience, poverty, humility; for after having practised so many of them and for so long a time, since the life of a Religious is only, if properly understood, a continued exercise of obedience and other virtues, these acts have had only the appearance of virtue; for as regards the reality of virtue, and to produce the habit, they ought to be made with application of mind, and with purity of intention and all the other circumstances necessary to render them perfect. We do not acquire the habit of writing well by writing badly, but by forming our letters according to the rules of art; thirdly, these unhappy persons have performed acts contrary to the virtues, which have plunged them into this deplorable state, for by doing their actions tepidly, obeying carelessly and with oppos-

tion of will and judgment, giving their eyes liberty to gaze on every object that presents itself, their ears liberty to hear all sorts of news, and the other senses liberty to seek their pleasures, by making their prayer distractedly and tepidly, they have contracted the habit of acting in this manner. These acts often repeated, have taken root in their souls, to such a degree as to make it almost morally impossible that they should act otherwise.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LOVE OF OUR LORD MAKES US AVOID VENIAL SIN.

I. Difference between mortal and venial sin.—II. Venial sin offends God. III. Sullies the soul.—IV. Hinders advancement in perfection.

We have said that divine love gives to the soul which experiences it, great desires of advancing in virtue and practising all the acts of justice included in these words of David. *Avoid evil and do good.* We will speak of what regards the flight of sin, but as we have already spoken of mortal sin we will speak here only of venial sin, which is more common among persons who make profession of piety. We will treat of its nature, its effects and its remedies.

I. As regards its nature, venial sin is essentially a sin, having the true nature of sin, because it is a voluntary offence in thought, word or deed against reason, equity and the will and law of God.

It is distinguished from mortal sin, in that mortal sin is a great and notable offence against the will of God, while venial sin is a less offence. The disorder of mortal sin, says St. Thomas, is that it is directly opposed to the end of man; it excites man by the most deplorable of abuses to place in a creature his end and beatitude, which are to be found, not in the creature but in the Creator. The disorder of venial sin is not opposed to the end of man

but to the means given him to attain that end. By it man ardently attaches himself to the creature, not by taking the creature for his end, but as a means to attain his end ; in not referring the creature to this end he becomes guilty of an abuse, and commits an offence against God, who gives all creatures to man as means to attain his end and as steps to arrive at his beatitude; He wishes that man should employ them in this way and not in any other. But this disorder is not so grave as that which is directly opposed to this end, which constitutes mortal sin, while that which is opposed only to the means, constitutes venial sin. Among men some faults are considered so enormous as to render their perpetrator worthy of death ; others, not so grievous, may be atoned for by slight punishments. Among friends every small offence does not rupture friendship ; some offences destroy friendship, others only weaken it ; they do not extinguish the fire of love, but they lessen its heat. It would be cruel to dismiss a servant for every trifling offence ; for breaking a glass, for example, but if he rebelled against his master, abused and struck him, he deserves to be sent away or severely punished. Thus mortal sin merits death and the withdrawal of the friendship of God because it is a grave opposition to his will; the servant who is guilty of it deserves to be banished from His house, that is, from heaven, and to be subjected to great punishments ; but venial sin, being a smaller fault, does not deserve to be so rigorously punished. Let us now see more in detail the effects of venial sin.

It is certain that though venial sin does not cause the terrible evils mortal sin causes, yet its consequences are so prejudicial, that if the least of them were rightly understood, this knowledge would imprint on the hearts of all an extreme horror of it, and cause them to resolve never to render themselves guilty of it. Behold its principal effects.

II. Venial sin is an offence and an injury to God; it offends His Majesty, it injures His goodness, it combats His power, it diminishes his glory, it wounds all His perfections, because all sin essentially produces these effects. "All the disorderly movements of my soul, however light they may be, are injuries against Thee, O God my Saviour," exclaims St. Bernard; "the motions of anger attack Thy goodness, the motions of envy attack Thy charity, the motions against chastity attack Thy unalterable purity; and so of the others, which the corruption of my heart engenders every day, and which wound the sovereign beauty of Thy resplendent countenance." It is not astonishing then, that, as the Sage says, "to God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike;" which ought to be understood not only of mortal sin, but also, in a measure, of venial sin; because God who is the sovereign purity can endure no stain, and because sin is the only enemy of God. Hence theologians assure us that it would be better that all men and animals were destroyed, all angels annihilated, the heavens and the earth reduced to ashes, and the whole earth dissolved, than that a single venial sin should be committed. The reason of this is clear: it is that the least evil done to the Creator is incomparably greater, more to be feared and more to be avoided, than all the evils of creatures; as it would be better that many peasants should be beaten than that the king should receive a small blow, because of the dignity and importance of his person. Hence the blessed would rather be driven forever from Paradise, lose the inestimable treasures of glory they possess, and be precipitated into eternal flames, or annihilated, than commit the least venial sin.

III. Venial sin spoils the most beautiful work of God, the masterpiece of His hands, I mean a just soul; for sin is a horrible stain which sullies its beauty; it is like a hideous ulcer on a fair countenance. Speaking of venial

sin, St. Austin says : "Though these sins do not kill the soul they are to it what a disgusting wound is to a beautiful countenance ; they cause the soul to enter the presence of the heavenly Spouse with shame and confusion ; they destroy our beauty and replace it by a hideousness which renders us unworthy of the embraces of Him who is the most beautiful among the sons of men." If a princess, promised in a marriage to a king, contracted a cutaneous disease, the contract would be broken, because though otherwise suitable her present malady renders her unfit to be the wife of a king. We may say as much with still stronger reason of Our Lord, since the Majesty of Our Lord surpasses infinitely that of all earthly monarchs. Hence St. Paul says: Christ has loved His Church and delivered Himself to death for her, that she might become beautiful and agreeable in His eyes, having neither spot nor wrinkle.

IV. Venial sin is a great obstacle to our advancement in perfection. Hence the Holy Fathers have compared it to a heavy weight under which one easily succumbs, and to a muddy road after rain, in which though one is not deprived of the faculty of walking, yet it is difficult or impossible for him to walk fast or to run. Philo, Bishop of Scarpanthia, said that venial sin resembled the fish called the remora, which though scarcely half a foot long is able to impede the largest ship on the sea. And though the eagle be the king of birds and has strength to fly immensely high, he cannot soar aloft or even raise himself a foot above the earth if he be restrained by a slight cord. Richard of St. Victor, explaining these words of the Spouse, "I have taken the bolt from my door, and opened to my Beloved," understands by the bolt venial sin, which closes to Our Lord the door of the soul, and he says : "The Spouse relates how she has avoided the smallest sins, that she might possess her Beloved, and the lightest defects in

words, in thought, in deed, which might retard her happiness, and which are represented by the bolt; for as a bolt though small prevents a door from being opened, so venial sins prevent the soul's being purified. Our Lord refrains from showering on it all His blessings, He does not fill it with His grace, He does not lavish on it His caresses, because negligences, though small, obscure the soul, and close the entrance to the perfection of grace." As there are people who are always indisposed and who never enjoy perfect health though they eat well, sleep well and fulfil all the functions of a healthy people, because there is some interior organ vitiated; so some souls are always weak and languishing, though they make mental prayer daily, communicate often, read good books and practise other pious exercises, because they are subject to certain defects of which they will not correct themselves.

But this effect of venial sin and the two following effects belong not to sins of surprise, of pure frailty, to which the holiest are subject in this valley of tears, but to *deliberate* venial sin—as a multitude of useless words, small lies, rash judgment in light matters, contempt of others, envy, trivial detraction, murmurs against Superiors, negligence in rejecting distraction, in preparing for communion, performing spiritual exercises by routine and without fruit, yielding to vanity and self-esteem, seeking superfluities under the names of necessaries, etc. These are great obstacles to perfection, chiefly for two reasons: 1. Because sin being, according to the doctrine of St. Thomas, a disorderly affection and attachment to the creature, it is evident that the soul cannot freely mount to God when sin keeps her elsewhere; 2. We can go to God only by good and virtuous actions, for bad ones are opposed to Him, and indifferent ones cannot conduct us to Him. Now all action, however excellent it appears, is of no value and cannot be pleasing to God if it be vitiated by venial sin, because

it is evident that sanctity does not consist in committing sin, nor can we merit reward from infinite justice for a good work badly performed. But this is true only when venial sin sullies the body of the action, as that which corrupts the intention—vain-glory, for instance—and not when the action is but partially vitiated, as it may be by a voluntary distraction, which robs our prayer of its merit for the time, but does not destroy the merit of the preceding part of the prayer.

SECTION I.

ANOTHER EFFECT OF VENIAL SIN.

I. It closes the entrance to actual graces.—II. Actual graces include good inspirations.—III. Protection from evil.—IV. Direction in the ways of salvation.—V. Sin deprives us of three things.—VI. Mortal sin. VII. Venial sin.

The fourth effect of venial sin is that it closes the entrance to the graces of God, which we need to work out our salvation; not however to the graces God gives to all, even to the greatest sinners, but to the efficacious graces which are absolutely necessary for salvation, in effect. This is one of the most terrible of God's chastisements, a certain mark of His anger, one of the most grievous strokes of His vengeance.

II. But to comprehend this we must consider, first, the excellence of the thing which venial sin robs us of; for to judge of the greatness of a loss we must know the value of the thing lost. For this purpose let us see what theologians teach us on this subject. Actual grace, says the learned and pious Lessius, of which venial sin deprives us, includes three things: inspiration, protection and direction. Inspiration produces its effects on three different faculties: on the understanding, inasmuch as God en

lightens it and gives it good and salutary knowledge, capable of moving and touching the will ; on the imagination, in that by the force of grace it arrests its wanderings, fixes its levity and attaches it to good objects ; and on the will, by rendering it docile to His inspirations. But to comprehend this still better, it must be remarked that the human mind, not only in sinners but even in the just is, as regards spiritual things, shrouded in darkness, so that it conceives things only in a dry, barren manner, because, as its operations depend on the senses, it is not without great difficulty that it can take cognizance of spiritual things, which are above its capacity, and not conformable to its ordinary manner of acting. Moreover, the imagination is a very volatile faculty which delights to wander among frivolous objects. It is not easy to excite the will to spiritual things and to dispose it to receive impressions of vfrtue, because to attain this it must disengage itself from the tyranny of the senses, and the understanding presents things in a peculiar manner. A fine picture must be hung in a particular position, in order to awaken in the beholder sentiments of admiration ; in another light it would appear defective ; so virtue, though it be virtue, and by consequence very good and beautiful, cannot make its sweets cognizable to the will without the aid of the understanding, which displays it to the will in a light which God alone knows, as we see by the example of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and other great men of antiquity who had so much knowledge, and who yet became no better by it. Hence grace is absolutely essential to arrest the wanderings of our imagination, to cause our understanding to comprehend in a salutary manner the truths of salvation and show them to the will in a way that proclaims the necessity of embracing them. This grace is not limited to a light of the understanding, to a single good affection of the will ; there must be many, because if there were only

one the sentiment would pass away as soon as the ray disappeared, and the sentiment gone, these faculties would gravitate to their natural weakness and return to terrestrial things, drawn and incited by the senses.

III. The protection of grace shields man from all that can injure his salvation, and bestows on him all that can promote it. It holds the demon in check, that he may not tempt man above his strength ; and it is well to remark that the power of the devil is so great, his artifices so subtle, his experience so vast, his will so malicious, that if God did not restrain him he would pervert even the holiest of men. There is no man so humble that he would not render proud, so chaste that he would not render unchaste, so temperate that he would not render intemperate, so charitable that he would not render cruel ; he would exterminate everywhere the worship of the true God, rout out all sentiments of religion, fill cities, kingdoms, provinces and families with the most horrible confusion, but God restrains him from doing the evil he designed to do, and allows him to do only what he permits. God holds him back as lions and mad dogs are held back by their keepers ; these animals cannot injure those who look at them, unless the keeper loosen their chains. The protection of grace consists in moderating and governing in our regard the envy with which the demon burns for our ruin—in weakening the force of his arm when he attacks us, in warding off his arrows, in counteracting the fury of his strokes, so that the worst he is able to do against us will not injure us, unless we please. More, this protection of grace turns from us many temptations from the world, the flesh and the devil, to which, because of our weakness and the strength of our enemies, we should infallibly yield if God permitted us to be attacked by them. Hence, by the secret design of His paternal providence, and with hands full of mercy, He wards off these temptations ; or if He permits them to

assail us, He renders our minds, as it were, incapable of perceiving them, or turns it to some other object that it may forget the temptation, which soon vanishes.

IV. Finally, the direction of grace consists in this, that God leads man by the hand in the way of salvation, sweetens the fatigues of his pilgrimage, consoles him in his sorrows, removes obstacles from his path, gives him occasions of practising virtue, and the light and strength to practise it. Behold all that is included in actual grace and the succor God gives to man.

V. Now sin, mortal or venial, takes away or diminishes by degrees these succors, in proportion as it becomes more grievous and frequent. It must be remembered here, that there is no question of sufficing, but of efficacious superabundant grace, not of succors, without which we cannot save ourselves. And, first, the Lord will cease to infuse into us good thoughts and holy knowledge. He will enlighten our mind but rarely and feebly, like the sun which during winter emits a dull light and radiates but little heat; the imagination, like an unbridled horse, will wander among foolish and dangerous objects; and ere long a man in this state will find it, difficult to say a single *Pater* with recollection. The will loses the attraction for divine things and attaches itself to creatures; it becomes arid and, as it were, careless in the business of salvation; it finds the exercises of piety, interior and exterior mortification, obedience and other duties, tedious and insupportable. The soul is entirely occupied with useless and frivolous desires and affections. As regards the protection of God, He takes no more special care to defend and sustain him; He contents Himself with ordinary solicitude; He permits the devil to have more power over him, to inflame his passions, to obscure his intellect, to replenish his will with dryness and disgust. He permits the love of creatures to have more power over him, and to lead him into snares

from which he will not come forth victorious ; He furnishes no more particular assistance, so that being almost without arms the soul is in great danger of being wounded and put to death. Direction is taken away, or at least considerably diminished. God does not lead this soul to the execution of any good designs, since it has none ; or if it have some, they are ineffectual, being conceived without being brought forth, and consequently they come to nothing. He leaves it to do as it pleases in spiritual things ; He permits it to dash against rocks, that is, to lavish its affections on creatures who may become the cause of its ruin.

Behold what happens to a man from whom God withdraws His succors, not that He fails to excite, protect and direct him in the ways of salvation, as we have already said ; but because the understanding is so pre-occupied, the will so taken up, that this excitation, this protection, this direction which might save him, will not save him in such dispositions, and because his graces being too weak and too few, remain ineffectual ; there being a certain number of graces, of lights for the understanding, of holy affections for the will, necessary to the salvation of each, which God alone knows. If He give them to you, you shall certainly be saved ; if He withdraw them even partially, you shall infallibly be lost, because in occasions of sin you will fall, and though you may rise again you will soon relapse, and after a series of falls you will at length fall so low that you will never be able to rise.

Very often the salvation of a man depends on a small thing, great rivers sometimes have insignificant sources ; our ruin, the torrent of our misfortune, may originate in a very trifling matter. A nail may cause the death of a horse, a leak can destroy a ship, a bad lock may give entrance to thieves, who will carry off the accumulated treasures of years. To kill a man the sword, fire or pestilence

is not always necessary ; a crumb of bread, an insect may do it ; a very small thing might injure us if God did not prevent it. A man quietly returning to his house encounters his enemy, a quarrel ensues, swords are drawn, and in a few moments he is a corpse. A traveller sees two roads ; he takes what seems to him the better, but it leads to a wood in which robbers are concealed, who rush upon and assassinate him ; had he taken the other road he would have remained unharmed. Similar accidents are of daily occurrence, which would not happen if God gave an inspiration that He does not give, because men have rendered themselves unworthy of it, and they are lost because it is not given.

VI. The first cause of this dreadful misfortune is mortal sin, not only when it is in the soul, but sometimes even after it has been effaced ; for though God always remits the eternal pain, and even, if you will, the temporal punishment of purgatory, when man returns to his duty it does not necessarily follow that He remits the spiritual pain which consists in the diminution of His graces, in certain afflictions and interior anguishes with which He permits the soul to be tormented. He also sends to this soul exterior and temporal miseries, as we see by the example of David who, after repenting so bitterly of his two crimes of adultery and homicide, and receiving pardon of them, was nevertheless so severely punished in many ways, and chiefly by the revolt of his son Absalom, and the death of this rebellious son, which was one of the most bitter sorrows he ever experienced, as he eloquently testified by his tears and touching lamentations in presence of all the people. Thus a man, after being cleansed from his sin, shall yet be chastised by God for this sin—by the retention of some grace He had resolved to give him, if it had not been committed, by permitting him to fall into other sins, to be tormented with scruples, to have his intel-

lect obscured and his will rendered obstinate, to be agitated by many spiritual tempests which otherwise he should have escaped. It is one thing to pardon the sin, and another to accord the sinner the same favors as before. Though a prince pardons his favorite some notable fault and receives him back to his friendship, yet it often happens, and with reason, that he does not admit him to the same degree of intimacy, that he is more cold and reserved than formerly. Hence the Holy Ghost wisely says : *Of sin forgiven be not without fear ;*[1] for though it be certainly pardoned, you have always reason to fear some loss or chastisement which may be the cause of your ruin. And many would not now be in hell, had they not been attacked by temptation in such a time and such a place ; if they had not entertained such a person ; if they had not met with such an occasion ; if they had received all the succors God had prepared for them, had they not committed such a sin. Sin, though forgiven, leaves marks which last a long time : it was said of the Romans that, wherever they fought, they left such traces of carnage and destruction behind them that the place would be recognized by these terrible signs ten years after. As much may be said of sin. Hence the Saints shed so many tears and performed such austere penance for their sins, though they were assured of pardon : 1, because the power of their ardent love caused them to be penetrated with the most bitter sorrow for having offended Him whom alone they loved ; 2, to recover the graces and favors they had merited to lose. Therefore no one ought to regard himself secure, but to *work out his salvation with fear and trembling*, as St. Paul advises ; to redouble his prayers, to augment his mortifications, to multiply his good works, and thus to attract anew the lights, the succors, the inspirations of which He has rendered himself unworthy.

VII. Venial sin, above all when it is habitual, when it is

[1] Eccl. v. 5.

the result of negligence and malice, contributes much to this misfortune, because God often punishes it by the subtraction of many graces, by obscurities, by aridities, by troubles of conscience, and many other secret evils. When between two friends one is no longer attentive to please his friend, when he fears not to render him bad offices though trivial, the other soon cools in his affection. Great offences destroy friendship, little ones lessen it; reiterated offences soon rob the servant of the affection of his master. Venial sin lessens the affection of God for us, hence theologians agree in saying that among other effects it cools the fire of charity, which may be understood not only of the charity of man towards God, but also the charity of God towards man. The flames of this love diminished, man has no longer the same ardor for the service and glory of God; God no longer communicates so familiarly with him; He becomes less liberal of His gifts and graces, and all this often causes man irreparable evils.

SECTION II.

OTHER EFFECTS OF VENIAL SIN.

I. It disposes to mortal sin by depriving the soul of its defences.—II. By giving entrance to all that excites to mortal sin.—III. We must fear the number of venial sins.—IV. Venial sin causes strange evils.

I. The fifth effect of venial sin is, according to the doctrine of St. Thomas and of all theologians, to dispose to mortal sin. In this it resembles sickness, which does not kill, but only prepares the way for death. Venial sin, however great and frequent it may be, cannot kill the soul, but it prepares the way for mortal sin, which at once kills the soul. This I prove by two reasons which the Angelic Doctor advances: first, because venial sin tears from the soul all that can shut out mortal sin; namely, the order of

reason, which subjects it to the Creator, even in the smallest things; good thoughts, holy affections, interior graces, as we have already shown. The soul being no longer sustained in its weakness, soon falls; if we take away from a column the base which supports it, it must necessarily fall. By the grace of God I am what I am, says St. Paul. If my passions be well regulated, if my imagination do not wander when I think of the things of salvation; if my understanding be enlightened, my will inflamed; if my body and my soul conspire to practise virtue, it is grace which produces in me these salutary effects; without it, my whole interior would be in disorder. Catch us the little foxes which destroy our vineyards, says the Spouse; she means, according to the common interpretation, venial sins, which are aptly represented by the little foxes; because, as the fox is cunning and enters deceitfully into the place he designs to rob, so venial sin is artful and glides more subtly into the soul than mortal sin. Hence some Saints have said that mortal sin is not so dangerous as venial, because the very sight of it excites horror; we avoid it more easily because of its malice and the eternal punishments prepared for it: venial sin gains access with more facility, because it inspires not so great a horror, nor are its consequences so dreadful. Foxes ruin vineyards because they make their holes near the roots of trees, and the roots being injured, the trees will not long flourish; venial sin, by rendering the soul unworthy of the graces and succors of God, which gave it life, puts it in a position in which its ultimate death becomes morally certain.

II. The second reason is, that venial sin opens the door of the soul to all that positively and efficaciously disposes to mortal sin; namely, temptations, which the anger of God permits as a punishment for its negligence, or which spring from its own weakness, or from the bad dispositions to which venial sins have reduced it, each one being like a

blow which weakens still more the already bruised soul; thus wounded, and consequently enfeebled, it cannot rightly acquit itself of its duties, nor has it fortitude to resist the attacks to which it is constantly exposed in this life. We see that a sick man loses the sense of taste and has his other senses only very imperfectly, because he has not vital spirits in as great abundance as he had when in health; he becomes so weak that he cannot lift the slightest burden nor put one foot before the other. In like manner, the habit of venial sin produces a strong inclination to mortal sin, with which it has much reference; he who gives himself the habit of sinning venially, by theft or any other vice, will soon sin mortally, in virtue of the habit, if he be not on his guard, because habit always leads to the perfection of action; the habit of stealing small things, and thus sinning venially, excites the soul to steal perfectly; that is, to commit great thefts, which are mortal sins.

Speaking of Judas, St. Chrysostom makes these remarks: Judas was in the habit of appropriating some small part of the alms confided to him; his covetousness increasing by degrees, he ended by committing the blackest perfidy and the most horrible of crimes. Behold where the habit of venial sin leads. Venial sin, which in the commencements seems a mere nothing, goes on increasing, and if it be not corrected, it insensibly conducts to mortal sin. Those who roll from the summit of a mountain cannot stop when they please; very often they roll on till they reach its base. The soul never stops where it falls, says St. Gregory; if it do not quickly rise, it gravitates by its own iniquity to the depth of the abyss: *The sinner adds sin to sin*, says the Sage, because, as Faustus, Bishop of Reggio, remarks, "if, after falling into any fault, I do not rise immediately, I shall often have great difficulty in rising, being held down by a certain inclination, and, if I may so speak,

a certain sweetness." Whence this saying of the Holy Ghost, so often cited: "He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little." Let us beware of committing any fault, says St. Dorotheus, for small faults soon lead to great ones. When a man begins to say: What matter if I say a little word in time of silence? if I eat at forbidden times? let him be sure that in following out this principle he shall cause his own ruin; for he will contract a bad habit which will propel him from bad to worse, and render him insensible to everything. Hence, my brothers, regard little things as of great importance; believe me they really are so, and a bad habit is a cancer that gnaws the heart by degrees. Virtues and vices have weak beginnings which conduct to great results.

III. The holy Fathers continually repeat that we ought to fear extremely the number of venial sins and regard them as sure causes of ruin. Do not despise them because they are small, says St. Austin, but fear them because they are numerous—[he speaks of rude words, of immoderate laughter and like human infirmities, and not of more considerable venial sins]—they are not small, because they are in great number and habitual; therefore fear that their number, if not their enormity, may one day overwhelm you. If we are not afraid of venial sins when we weigh them, says St. Gregory, let us fear when we count them; drops of water form torrents, a small leak can destroy a ship as well as a great tempest. When the Fathers speak thus, they do not mean that any number of venial sins, however great, can damn the soul; but that the habit of sinning venially, infallibly disposes to mortal sin, which must have this deplorable consequence. The holy man Job calls sin *formicaleo*, to show, as St. Nilus observes, that sin is only an ant in the beginning, but that it soon becomes a lion; that little things become great, and that venial sin paves the way for mortal. Beginnings are

always weak; a man never becomes very just or very wicked in a moment, but by degrees. In nature all living things have small beginnings. When a traveller wanders from his path, every step he makes takes him farther from the right road; in sickness, in wounds, if beginnings be not attended to, the maladies soon become incurable; a small opening may result in the ruin of the strongest building, and a spark of fire is sufficient to ignite a whole forest.

St. Austin relates a remarkable example of this in St. Monica, his mother. She was brought up in her father's house with her sisters, by a prudent and virtuous servant, who was so strict that she would not permit them to drink even water except at meals, wisely remarking: "To-day you will drink water because you have not wine at your disposal; but when you become mistresses of families, you will find water insipid and begin to drink wine, if you now contract the habit of drinking frequently." Despite these good instructions, Monica, having been sent into the wine-cellar to draw wine for the table, tasted a little merely through curiosity, for she disliked wine; yet by doing this frequently, she got the habit of taking it, and was soon able to drink whole glasses of it. Some time after, in a little domestic altercation that took place, one of the servants called her a wine drinker, which so piqued Monica that her naturally virtuous mind led her to correct this defect. I shall add to this example the following fact related by Rufinus: An ancient Religious lived in such eminent virtue that he seemed to lead here below the life of an angelic creature, rather than that of a man clothed with flesh and subject to human infirmities. Our Lord, to recompense his fidelity, sent him, by an angel, a loaf of white bread, which he found on his table when he returned from prayer, and which lasted him two or three days. After enjoying this favor for several years, some thoughts of vanity and

self-esteem passed through his mind, so swiftly that they were almost imperceptible ; they returned again, and this happening several times, he began to give some consent. He no longer took as much care to recollect himself as formerly, though he did not neglect his exterior exercises, which the habits of years had rendered easy ; but the evil daily increasing, he soon began to entertain thoughts of returning to the world, and had done so, if God, instead of the white loaf, had not sent him a black one, to open his eyes to his dangerous state. Thus men come to ruin, small faults giving entrance to great ones.

IV. The sixth effect of venial sin is to cause man strange evils and make him deserving of horrible sufferings. All theologians agree that the bitterest pains of this life are below the punishment venial sin merits. The cruel torments which purchased heaven for the martyrs, and the sufferings inflicted on the most wicked criminals, are as nothing in comparison to its deserts. Moses, that great servant of God, for one venial sin of diffidence was not allowed to set his foot in the promised land, which was for him a terrible punishment. Lot's wife, for having looked towards Sodom, contrary to the command of the angel, was turned into a pillar of salt, that men might become wise by her example, remarks St. Austin. Oza, for having sustained the Ark of the Covenant, which was on the point of falling, with less respect than he should, was instantly struck dead, though his action was praiseworthy and full of religion. Fifty thousand Bethsamites, and seventy of the most distinguished among them, experienced the same fate, for having looked at the Ark with sentiments of curiosity. David, for having numbered his subjects through a motive of vanity, was punished, his kingdom being ravaged by a cruel pestilence which in three days destroyed seventy thousand persons. But all this and all that can be endured here below cannot be

compared to the sufferings of purgatory. This fire, says St. Austin, is more intolerable than all that can be endured in this life; than burning fevers, horrible convulsions, agonizing cramps, raging headaches and toothaches, wheels, racks, scourges, fires, wild beasts, hunger, thirst. Terrible as these pains are, they are small, or rather nothing, when compared to the pains of purgatory, which one venial sin merits. And since we are certain that God never punishes by passion, but always by right reason, that His mercy always lessens in some manner the rigor of His justice, it necessarily follows that venial sin, however light, is a very great evil and a subject of fear, since it renders man deserving of such great chastisements. O, how justly does the Holy Ghost admonish us to *flee from sins as from the face of a serpent!* the teeth of them are as the teeth of a lion killing the souls of men. All sin is a two-edged sword, the wounds whereof are incurable; only divine remedies can heal them.

SECTION III.

OF CORRECTION OF DEFECTS AND VICES.

I. Self-knowledge.—II. Means of acquiring it.—III. Difference between vices, sins and imperfections.—IV. We must attack the predominant passion.—V. Means of rooting out a vice.—VI. What we should do when we have gained some victories over a vice.

All these unhappy effects which venial sin produces, ought to inspire us with a lively horror of it, and excite us to avoid it with all our strength. Since it is a horrible stain and a hideous wound which disfigures our soul, we ought to fly it with great care and not permit it to sully our soul, the image of God. Who would like to be covered with leprosy? What sensible man is there who, if attacked with this terrible malady, would not use all his efforts to

be delivered from it? We must then take the greatest precautions to avoid venial sin, since it is an obstacle to our perfection, a cooling of charity, a bond which attaches us to what corrupts us, that is, to creatures, a separation from God, the sovereign good ; since it renders us worthy of such great chastisements in this life and the next, we who naturally have so great a dread of suffering, who take such pains to avoid it ; since it dries up the source of God's graces, or at least hinders them from flowing abundantly on us ; since it shuts out His light and His inspirations, and excites us to mortal sin. And to conceive a still great horror of it let us often reflect that the greatest things have small beginnings, and that generally the first step a man makes towards damnation is only a venial sin. Our Lord spoke to St. Peter these terrible words : *If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me* : and as He afterwards declared, when he said that only the feet of St. Peter needed washing, He spoke not of mortal sins, but of venial sins, particularly habitual and deliberate ones ; from which if the soul be not purified, it runs a great risk of being lost, because it may be abandoned by God, who will become parsimonious of His graces, and permit it to fall into mortal sin, which will cause its ruin. Thus little things may become a source of great misfortunes. Hence the devil tries to draw virtuous persons into venial sin, as he strives to make others fall into mortal sin.

St. Gertrude, one day reciting her office with some slight distraction, saw afterwards the devil, who mimicked her recital of the psalm commencing : *Thy testimonies are admirable*, and having finished it, said to her : Thy Creator and thy Lord has done well in giving thee a tongue to praise Him, since in speaking to Him thou art so careless that thou hast omitted so many words, syllables and letters. Another time the same Saint having let some bits of thread and wool fall to the ground when she was sewing, though

she had piously offered the action to our Lord, saw the devil gathering them up that he might afterwards reproach her for a fault against poverty. Surius relates something similar of St. Acchard, Abbot of Jumieges, who having cut his hair at a time when the rule required him to be doing something else, saw the devil before him counting the hairs and writing the number in a book. The Saint astonished, asked the cause of this. The demon replied, that it was because he had made his tonsure at a time when he ought not to make it. The Saint then said that he knew God would pardon him, for he had been prevented by the duties of his office from making it at the prescribed time. He then drove the devil away with the sign of the Cross, and leaving his head half shaved assembled his brethren in chapter, related what had passed, publicly confessed his fault, and entreated them to beseech God to pardon him, which they did: and the tonsure of the Saint was miraculously finished. A Religious who, contrary to his rule, let some crumbs of bread fall to the ground during his repast, saw just before death the demon with a large sack filled with these crumbs, who tried to induce him to commit the sin of despair, in which perhaps he had been successful were it not for the prayers of the other Religious. St. Francis said that the demon only asks of us a little hair; from this he knows he shall soon be able to form a great cable to draw us into his power. I knew a person to be cruelly tormented by the malign spirit because she would not obey his suggestions in a very trifling matter. And our salvation is of such consequence that we ought to take all possible precautions, and avoid with the greatest care whatever may in the slightest degree be detrimental to it.

III. Our own interest should excite us to fly venial sin, but the love of God should have still greater power over us. *You who love our Lord, hate evil,* because all sin,

whether mortal or venial, displeases Him, dishonors Him, injures Him. This is enough to make the soul that loves God as her Father, Our Lord as her Spouse, hate and abhor sins even the smallest. A good son would rather die than do the least injury to his father ; a soul that sincerely loves Our Lord would rather die than cause Him the least displeasure. Love which essentially procures all possible good for the beloved object, is incompatible with offence ; it cannot bear to see injury done to its beloved, still less to inflict it. He who feareth God neglecteth nothing, he watches over everything that can please or displease Him ; but he that loves God is still more cautious, for fear is natually cold and reserved, while love is bold and ardent ; fear only makes one walk, love makes him fly. St. Catherine of Genoa said that the smallest offence against God is, to the loving soul, more intolerable than hell. Hence St. Catherine of Sienna bitterly bewailed the smallest faults, as having turned her head aside during prayer, to look at her brother who passed by ; because, as St. Jerome observes on this subject, she had not sufficiently considered the command and the excellence of Him who issued it. It is in this balance we should weigh venial sin if we would conceive a proper idea of its enormity. The Emperor Alexander Severus had so furious an aversion against thieves, that when he saw one he would gladly pluck the eyes out of him. We should be still more indignant against ourselves when we commit venial sin, if we knew its heinousness.

IV. To conclude, and to console virtuous souls who, notwithstanding all their vigilance, sometimes fall into venial sin, I shall draw upon a beautiful discourse St. Bernard made on this subject, in which he says that by the sin of Adam we have fallen into so deplorable a condition that we are not only sullied, but grievously wounded. The waters of Baptism have cleansed our stains and healed

our wounds, but yet we remain so weak that the wounded parts are sensitive to every adverse impression. Hence it is impossible, while we live in this mortal and perishable body, not to commit some faults; for according to St. John: *If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* Our Lord washed the feet of St. Peter, who, presenting his hands and his head, did not need to be purified in these parts, to show that whoever has the head, that is, the intention, and the hands, which typify the actions, pure, and—to be still more explicit—whoever is free from mortal sin is not entirely free from venial sin, because the feet, which are the affections, always become a little soiled in walking through the dust of this life; in spite of all precautions it is extremely difficult to escape some movement of vanity, sensuality or curiosity; for the words of the Apostle St. James are but too true: *In many things we all offend.* But need we therefore despair? No, please God; it is true that we must be purified of these faults, otherwise, as Our Lord said to St. Peter, we should have no part with Him; but we must not be too apprehensive, for in faults of weakness or surprise, which are merely inevitable, negligence is reprehensible, but too great fear is also culpable. Our Lord easily pardons them if we use the means He has given us. He sometimes even permits us to fall into them, to keep us in humility, to show us how much we owe to the grace and strength He gives us, since we are so weak of ourselves that, without Him, we should be unable to vanquish the smallest temptation.

V. Let us now see the means of obtaining pardon of venial sins. Theologians reduce them to three: 1. All the sacraments which, by their own power, efface venial sins, when they confer grace, without exacting of man any other dispositions than the intention to receive them as remedies for sin, or for the end for which they are established; 2. Acts of contrition, of divine love, of supernatural

attrition, and generally all the virtuous actions of a just man, which cleanse away venial sins, provided these acts be in some manner opposed to them, either by their nature, as an act of humility is opposed to a venial sin of pride, or by the intention, as when we do a good work to obtain the remission of these sins; for as acts of virtue as well as grace and charity, are, not generally speaking, incompatible with venial sin, if the act of virtue include not something opposed to these things, it cannot drive them from the soul; for a thing can be chased away only by its contrary. Now that an act of virtue may have the necessary opposition to sin, it should be made with this intention: if you desire to give it more force, and to procure that a single act should destroy all sins, known and unknown, it is sufficient to have an intention that bears upon all that is offensive to God: such an act purifies the soul of all its stains. 3. The last means consist in certain sacred things called *sacramentals*, as holy water, the prayers of the Church, blessed bread, the *Confiteor*, blessing given by Bishop or Priest, the act of striking the breast, all which have power to efface venial sins either by their own virtue and by simple use of them, when one is in the state of grace; or, which is more probable, by exciting a good interior movement, such as a sentiment of sorrow, or some other act of virtue, which blots them out.

We shall now treat of the manner of correcting vices and defects.

SECTION IV.

OF THE CORRECTION OF FAULTS AND VICES.

I. Self-knowledge.—II. Means of knowing ourselves.—III. Difference between vices, sins, defects, etc.—IV. We must attack the predominant passion.—V. Means of combating a vice.—VI. What should be done after gaining some victory.

I. To omit nothing regarding the first part of justice, which obliges us to avoid evil, it is necessary to treat of the

manner of correcting ourselves, and rooting out our defects. I say, first, that it is not possible that the will, blind as it is, will be able to do this unless the understanding, like a torch, goes before to enlighten it, nor can it cope with enemies which it does not see. The first thing necessary in order to correct faults is to know them; hence each must endeavor to know himself, his inclinations, his habits, his natural character and his faults, because it is impossible to regulate and reform what is unknown, otherwise remedies might be applied to the foot, where the pain is not, rather than to the head, where the disease is. Diseases of the mind as well as diseases of the body must be recognized before they can be healed; we cannot dress a wound without seeing it.

II. Now, in order to acquire self-knowledge we must, first, beg it of God, saying with St. Austin: Lord make me know Thee and know myself. 2. We must carefully reflect on ourselves, for if there is a point on which men are almost sure to be deceived, it is in the judgment they form of their vices and defects, because self-love hides or disguises them. 3. We may learn our defects by our falls or by our inclinations: if a man should grow angry five or six times a day, or speak ill of his neighbor, or be tempted to these defects, and does not fall because he resists, he may conclude that he is inclined to anger or detraction. Every man, however perfect he may be, ought to be firmly persuaded that as long as he is a sojourner in this vale of tears he shall always be subject to vices, sins and imperfections. There is no man who does not sin, says the Holy Ghost. If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. The reason of this is clear; grace drives out sin, but it does not destroy the sting of sin, the corruption of nature; this happiness is reserved for the sojourn of glory. Hence God, who knows the depths of our hearts, says of every one of us: Man is inclined to

evil from his youth ; he tends to it with all his thoughts and affections, if reason and divine grace restrain him not. We have within us concupiscence, the root of all evil, and the sad law which St. Paul calls the *law of the members;* this root will continually throw out bad shoots, which we must continually retrench.

III. But to comprehend this well, it must be observed that there is a difference between vices, sins, bad habits and bad inclinations. Vices are the sources of sins. "Vice is a corrupt humor which engenders the malady of sin," says St. Bernard, "which causes horrible wounds in the soul and hinders it from enjoying perfect health. Vice is the root of death and the origin of all evil, because it is the origin of sin, which is the climax of all evils and miseries." Sin is any thought, word or action against reason and the law of God. Imperfection may exist without sin, such as the first movements to vices, which cannot be sinful because the will has no part in them ; but they are yet imperfections and defects, because they are the productions of corrupt nature. Evil inclinations are the natural proneness a man has to evil. Bad habit is the disposition and facility a man has in committing some fault, as of slander or impatience, which is acquired by frequent acts. And all these evils, like so many troubled rivers, flow from what remains in us of original sin ; this is what we call the seed of sin *(fomes peccati)*.

IV. We must have our eyes continually fixed on ourselves to see our faults that we may be able to correct them, and chiefly the vices that form the source of our other disorders, because as every one has some dominant humor in his physical composition, so there is always a ruling passion in his soul : in some this is pride, in others self-love, in others anger ; in this person it is indevotion, in that other it is love of earthly goods, of creatures, proneness to particular friendships, etc.

When pride takes the ascendency, it infects the whole man ; it spreads its venom over his understanding, his will, his words, his actions, his interior and his exterior. He nourishes in his understanding a secret esteem of self, in his will a desire of reputation and glory, of appearing great ; the man ruled by pride thinks only of what flatters him, his words are haughty and imperious, his actions are absolute and full of authority, he delights in being praised ; he cannot support the least contempt without impatience, he never acknowledges his faults, he covers and excuses them as much as he can ; he wishes even to make them pass for virtues.

When it is self-love, man seeks to gratify his inclinations in eating and drinking, apparel, the arrangement of his chamber and in everything ; he is very tender of himself, he fears hunger, thirst, heat, cold ; he complains of the least inconvenience. This vice inclines the body and soul to what is contrary to chastity, because it excites them to seek their pleasure.

If anger predominates, it appears in the gait, the gestures, the manner of speaking, the movements, in all the actions ; he who has this for his ruling passion is rough and impetuous, and far from that sweet vivacity and tender, sage maturity with which we ought to act.

If it be indevotion, mental and vocal prayer, examens, lectures, Mass, confession, Communion, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, elevations of the heart, interior recollection, all exercises of piety savor of it, because he abandons them for frivolous reasons, or if he make them, it is without preparation, without attention, without affection and without fruit. It is the same with the other vices. Well, we must strive to discover this predominant passion which is the root of all our faults, else we cannot extirpate it. Let us now see the means of discovery.

V. The first is to know the nature and effects of this

passion and the damages it causes ; for without this knowledge we can do but little ; we must not fear the tedium of this study, which is always more profitable than many others to which we apply ourselves, and which contribute nothing to our salvation, or rather, are hurtful to it.

The second is to conceive a great hatred and horror of it, based upon the knowledge we have of its deformity and bad effects.

The third is a resolution to combat, vanquish and destroy this vice, inspired by the hatred and horror it excites in us. The most ordinary defect among persons who aspire to perfection, is that they do not attack the ruling passion with sufficient determination ; they do not, if I may so speak, attack the heart of it, they merely scratch its skin ; they lop off the branches but do not touch the trunk or the root ; thus the vice never dies, because they never attack the source of its life. Whoever wishes to gain a perfect victory over any vice must lay the axe to the root. When God gave the Israelites, who were a figure of the just, the order they should follow in destroying idols, images of vice, He said to them : Throw down their altars, break their statues, burn the groves consecrated to them, blot out their memory from the places in which they are worshipped.[1] When the good king Josias purified these places from their abominations, he filled them with the bones of the dead, to teach us, as Philo observes, that we ought to destroy our vices in such a manner that they will have no power to revive again. In this manner God commanded Saul to ruin Amalec, saying : Go, and smite Amalec, and utterly destroy all that he hath ; spare him not, nor covet anything that is his ; but slay both man and woman, child and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.[2]

Thus should we act with reference to our vices, other-

[1] Deut. xii. 3. [2] 1 Kings xv. 3.

wise they will always be our masters. For as the Israelites could never enjoy perfect peace in the Promised Land while there remained therein any of the hostile nations of whom God had said : You shall entirely destroy them, and have no pity on them ; so while we shall have one vice within us we can never enjoy perfect repose, because we nourish in our own hearts the seed of war and confusion.

The fourth is to beg earnestly of God means to combat this vice and strength to vanquish it ; for without His aid we shall combat in vain, because of our inherent weakness ; nature assists vice in many ways to destroy us, but with the divine succor we are strong, the victory is ours. Fear not, said Moses to the Israelites, because the Lord your God is in the midst of you, a God mighty and terrible : He will consume these nations, figures of vices, and shall slay them till they be utterly destroyed.[1]

We should direct to this intention not only our prayers but also our confessions, communions, Mass, mortifications and other pious exercises, to merit of God in the most plenteous and efficacious manner this victory. We must combat our vices, says Cassian, by attacking chiefly that which torments us most ; against *it* we must direct all our solicitude, our sighs, our tears, our meditations and our groans, and pray God continually that He would give us grace to vanquish it.

The fifth means of rooting out a vice is to make acts of the virtue which is contrary to it. We shall draw from this two great advantages : 1. We shall lose the habit of the sin ; 2. We shall acquire the habit of the opposite virtue. These acts should be interior and exterior ; we must perform a stated number every day that we may labor with ardor and perseverance in a thing so important. The advice Cassian gives regarding these interior acts is excellent : "If we wish to surmount a vice," says he "we must,

[1] Deut. vii. 21.

except in case of sins against chastity, represent to ourselves its object and imagine ourselves in an occasion of committing it, then doing all we can to vanquish it. If a man inclines to anger, he must constantly exercise himself in interior acts of meekness; let him represent himself overwhelmed with injuries by the malice of men, and then accustom himself to receive them with profound humility; let him put before his eyes the most painful and grievous things, and force himself in spirit to accept them with sweetness, considering the sorrows the Saints endured, the opprobrium of Jesus Christ, also that whatever pains he can endure are below his deserts; and thus he will prepare his heart for all sorts of contrarieties and sufferings. If, notwithstanding these resolutions, he falls into anger, let him strive to conquer it, and reproaching himself bitterly, let him say: For shame, weak man, you who were so courageous when no occasion presented itself, who imagined yourself so brave as to be able to support without emotion the most atrocious injuries, how does your patience, which seemed invincible, disappear at the least word? How can so slight a blast throw down your house, which you supposed built on a rock? What has become of your desire for battle, which made you say with David: Prove me, O Lord, and try me, sound my heart and visit my thoughts; see if there be in me a path of iniquity. See if sin can separate me from Thee, if I am really Thy servant. How the mere shadow of the enemy has dispersed all your preparations for war! Having thus condemned his cowardice, let him not leave unpunished the motion which anger caused, however small it be.

But in the exercise of these acts we must be attentive to two things, in which we commonly fail: the first is to practice them with constancy despite of all obstacles; the second is never to yield to sadness or weariness if it should happen that we have not rooted out the vice as soon as we

expected. The least difficulties dismay some and deprive them of the good will to advance ; others would wish to root out a vice and acquire a virtue after a day or two. Both should remember that to destroy things deeply rooted in our nature, as vice, and to acquire excellent things, as virtue, it is very reasonable that we should have some trouble, since we cannot gain anything of consequence without some pains. But to lessen the difficulties we must often remember the inestimable good this victory will procure us. As regards time, we should never look far ahead, not even to to-morrow but think only of employing the present well, and spending each day as if it were to be our last. The wise man never anticipates evil, present evils are quite sufficient for him.

The sixth means is proper to our Society, since no one has spoken of it at greater length than St. Ignatius ; it consists in the particular examen by which we undertake the correction of a single vice. In the morning we purpose to combat it well, during the day we watch over ourselves ; we note down our faults and victories, and as a preservative for the future, we should impose upon ourselves some penance. In this exercise we should follow the order prescribed by St. Ignatius.

These two means are of great importance ; we must apply ourselves to them with care, if we would see our hopes realized.

VI. When we gain some victory, in order that we may not lose its fruits, we should refer this victory not to our own industry, but to God, as David did, saying : " I shall beat my enemies as small as dust before the wind. I shall bring them to nought like dirt in the street ;" then attributing the glory to its owner, he adds : " O God, my deliverer from my enemies, Thou wilt lift me up against them that rise against me ; therefore will I give glory to Thee, O Lord, among the nations, and will sing a psalm to Thy Name."

We must afterwards be on our guard, and not cast ourselves into occasions of failing in this point, as if we had entirely vanquished it; for this we cannot do, since its first root, which is concupiscence, will never be destroyed during this life. Believe me, says St. Bernard, vices that are cut off sprout out again, they return after having been chased away, they rekindle though they seem extinguished, it is not enough to destroy them once, we must do it often, because whatever progress you make you will always find something to retrench; you deceive yourself if you imagine that during this life your vices are dead; they only slumber; whether you will or no the Jebusite shall always remain in your midst, he can be subdued but he cannot be exterminated." These last words ought not to be understood of vicious habits which can be eradicated, but of our nature corrupted by sin. If we fail in vigilance, says Cassian, the vice we thought we had conquered will take up arms anew, it will return like the demon in the Gospel with sevenfold fury. For example, if the vice of gluttony you have vanquished tempts you to lessen your strictness, beware of entertaining the temptation, otherwise the traitor will say: I shall return to my old habitation. Then taking with him other spirits to excite you to other vices you will soon fall into sins more dangerous than those of which you have already repented.

We have said enough regarding the first part of justice which consists in avoiding evil. We shall treat in the following volume of the manner of doing good and practising virtue, and we will see that divine love is not less powerful in exciting us to avoid evil than exciting us to do good.

BOOK FOURTH.

EFFECTS OF DIVINE LOVE.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LOVE OF OUR LORD EXCITES US TO PERFORM WELL OUR ORDINARY ACTIONS.

I. We ought to perform our ordinary actions well.—II. Through a motive of love.—III. It is in this that our perfection consists.—IV. Excellence of a good action.—V. Its value.—VI. Other advantages.—VII. Resolutions.

I. One of the greatest effects the love of God produces in a soul, is to make it attentive to perform well all its actions, because by this means it procures Him new glory and increases in us His grace and love. But as this is a chief point in the spiritual life, it is of vast importance to us to comprehend it well; hence we will speak of it at some length, but before treating of the manner of performing actions well, we will develop the motives which ought to excite us to sanctify our ordinary actions.

II. The first and chief motive to excite us to do our actions well, is the love of Our Lord; because each good action we do, procures, now and forever, honor and glory for Him; by each we testify our love for Him, procure Him joy and execute His will. For this He gives you grace and co-operates with you; this is the only thing, He asks and expects of you; He wishes that you apply yourself entirely to your duty in order to do it well. In doing it ill you rob Him of His glory, you disappoint His love, you despise His will, you render His grace fruitless. Hence God rejects and abhors the greatest works, if not done in accordance with His will; He complains bitterly, in Isaiah, that the Jews offered Him sacrifices with indevotion and irreverence, and He expresses His resentment by these strong words: *I hate your solemnities.* When you immolate

victims and make them burn with perfumes on My altars, you imagine you do something agreeable to Me, but you deceive yourselves, for *your festivals are intolerable to Me;* thus showing, says St. Jerome, that these sacrifices far from pleasing only angered Him. The words God uses in Malachy are still more terrible: I will curse your benedictions, I will curse them because they come not from your heart; I will reject your victims with indignation, I will throw in your face the ordures of your solemn sacrifices. God speaks thus with good reason, for if you offer to a prince a vile and disgusting object, he will not only reject your offering as unworthy of him, but regard your action as an outrage. God is infinitely greater than a prince, and has far more reason to be angry at such conduct, because He merits infinitely greater respect. Bad actions dishonor God, and only good ones honor and glorify Him; if we love Him this consideration will be powerful to excite us to do our actions well, that we may not merit the reproach He made to the Jews. It is necessary that He draw from our actions the glory and grace He has a right to expect.

III. Second motive. Our virtue and perfection consist in performing well our ordinary actions. God exacts not of us great and splendid achievements, but the common things which daily present themselves, and to which each person is obliged by his condition; a Religious, those prescribed by his rule; a Priest, those belonging to the sacerdotal state; a married man those which his state require; and so of all other conditions; each must place his sanctity and perfection in performing well the duties of his state in life, and be assured that he cannot do anything more pleasing to God; and herein the wisdom and incomprehensible goodness of God shine forth with the greatest lustre. There is nothing more proper to re-animate our hope and fortify our courage than to consider the admirable manner in which He designs to dispose of

all things. If He had limited our perfection to sublime and difficult things, to high contemplations, to raptures and ecstacies, to severe fasts, to great austerities, He had deprived a great number of the means of attaining it; they could say they had not wings to fly so high, that they had not strength to support all these labors; but since perfection can be acquired by easy and common things, by performing well the duties of our state in life, the actions we perform daily, there is no excuse for those who will not tend to perfection, since God demands nothing of them but what they are constantly doing, merely requiring that they should do it well.

This being so, we ought to strive with great care to do our actions well, we ought to centre all our thoughts and all our solicitude in the duties of our vocation, without minding those of others; let the secular think only of being a good secular without wishing to lead the life of a Priest; let the Priest seek to become a good Priest, to perfect himself in his sacerdotal duties and functions without troubling himself about the rules of Religious; let the Religious have no other end in view than to become a perfect Religious; a Religious ought to apply himself to the exercises of his own rule, without wishing to adopt the practices of another order, because God does not ask or expect this of him, nor give him grace to fulfil the customs of any order but his own. Every tree bears its own fruit: an apple-tree bears apples, a pear-tree pears, a fig-tree figs, but a peach-tree never bears figs or quinces, because they are not the fruit it is destined to bear, nor has it the juices necessary to form them. Moses relates that in the beginning of the world God commanded the earth to produce fruit trees, *each of which bore fruit according to its own kind*, and the Scripture adds that *God saw that it was good*. If the cherry-tree bear plums, though plums are good in themselves, this would be a disorder, because it

would be contrary to the order God has established in nature, and such a tree would be, properly speaking, neither a cherry-tree nor a plum-tree. Every Christian is a beautiful tree planted in the garden of the Church to produce fruits suitable to his own condition ; if he desire to bear other fruits, if a married man wish to lead the life of an ecclesiastic, to pray, sing psalms, remain very long in the church, separate himself from the world, as an ecclesiastic is obliged to do, his conduct would be reprehensible, because to live in this manner he should be an ecclesiastic and not a married man. If a Religious belonging to one order should take it into his head to observe the fasts, practise the austerities, adopt the hours of prayer, etc., peculiar to another order, he would do wrong ; in such a case he belongs neither to one order nor the other, because he wishes to bear fruits which are not proper to him, for which he has no sap, that is, to which he is not called by God, and for which he has not grace ; otherwise God would have called him to that order, and not to the order in which he is. Therefore, let every one strive to labor according to his condition, to perfect himself in the spirit of his vocation, and thus verify in himself what the Royal Prophet says of the just man : He shall be like a tree planted by running waters, which gives fruit in *due season*, and not out of season. The Prophet says elsewhere : In the midst of this valley of tears, the just man has disposed in his heart to *ascend by steps* to high perfection, according to the place and state in which *God hath set him ;* this is all God requires of him, and for this alone does he bestow his succors. The soul that loves God will always be influenced by this motive, because such a soul will have an ardent desire to become perfect and pleasing in His sight.

Third motive. A good action done in the state of grace is so great, so admirable, that no human mind can conceive

it, nor can any tongue furnish terms to explain it. The merit of supernatural things is such that they incomparably surpass, both in dignity and perfection, all the natural things of heaven and earth. Each virtuous action, however small, is, by reason of the principle of grace which ennobles it and elevates it to the supernatural state, more excellent, more pleasing and glorious to God than all the natural actions of all creatures that ever have been or shall be—than all the movements of the heavens, the influences of the stars, the effects of the sun and moon, the vital operations of plants and animals, and all the natural actions of angels and men. What incomprehensible dignity! what greatness! Laud as you will the exploits of Alexander, Cæsar, Scipio, Hannibal, of the greatest monarchs and most famous captains, all the victories they gained, the cities they took, the provinces they conquered—add to all this the science and sublimity of the philosophers, the eloquence of the orators, the genius of the poets, the erudition of the historians, the skill of the physicians, the most splendid work of the great masters in painting, sculpture, architecture. The seven wonders of the world and all that nature and art have produced since the commencement of the universe—all cannot approach in nobility or perfection to the smallest virtuous action done by a just man. The action of a fly or an ant is not comparable to the smallest action of a reasonable man, because the action of man proceeds from a nobler cause, the human soul, while the action of animals proceeds only from instinct; each virtuous action is still more elevated above actions purely natural, because it takes its source in the grace of God united to the will of man. Now grace belongs to an order infinitely elevated in perfection above the order of nature.

V. Besides this excellence, each of his virtuous actions is of inestimable price, and of such great value, that if we put in one side of a balance all the empires, honors and

riches of earth, and in the other the smallest action a just man can do, an *Ave Maria*, the Name of Jesus pronounced devoutly, the sign of the Cross made with attention ; nay, even a single step, a glance of the eye animated by a good intention, this action, so trifling in appearance, would outweigh all the others. All the kingdoms of the universe are beneath it in value, because nature is infinitely beneath grace and glory ; the smallest action done from a motive of virtue purchases a new degree of grace, an increase of charity, of infused virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost, and for the next life the glory of the blessed and the eternal possession of God. What inconceivable value! St. Paul says that acts of virtue *produce in us above measure an incomprehensible weight of glory.* To have an idea of this inestimable price, we must consider the goods prepared for us in heaven, the immense riches, sublime honors, sovereign glory, ineffable delights, the sweet company of Angels and Saints, of the Blessed Virgin, of Our Lord, and, above all, the Beatific Vision of God Himself ; and, in fine, the perfect beatitude of the whole man for a never-ending eternity. All these infinite treasures are the infallible recompense of every good work done in the state of grace. Hence St. Bernard calls good actions seeds of eternity ; for since the tree and the fruit are contained in the seed ; as philosophy discovers in a pippin an entire apple tree, the root, trunk, branches, blossoms and fruit that this tree will bear during many years, so each good action, how small soever it be, includes eternal happiness, and by the light of faith we may perceive therein the blessed vision of God and eternal felicity. And indeed it may well be said that the value and excellence of a good work are admirable and, as it were, infinite, since they have a sort of equality with goods that are infinite, and merit the recompense of the Beatific Vision for all eternity.

John the Deacon tells us that St. Gregory the great,

when he was abbot, gave an alms one day to a poor man. Some time after, he was elected Pope, and as according to his custom, he was giving dinner to twelve poor men, he perceived there were thirteen, he reprimanded his chaplain for having without orders admitted an additional guest. The chaplain having counted and re-counted them maintained there were only twelve, as did also the other assistants. The Saint thought this very extraordinary, and the more so as the thirteenth changed countenance from time to time—now he seemed a young man, now a venerable old man. When dinner was over, the Saint retained him after bidding adieu to the others, and taking him by the hand led him to his cabinet and conjured him to tell frankly who he was. The latter said he was the person to whom Gregory when Abbot had given an alms, that in reality he was an angel, and that to reward this action God had made the Saint His Vicar on earth, that he was ordered to descend on earth and take particular care of the Saint's business, and obtain for him of the Divine Majesty whatever he should ask. St. Gregory, astonished at what he had seen and heard, prostrated himself before God, and said with tears of tender devotion : "If God to recompense me for so small an alms has ra sed me to the highest earthly dignity, and granted me the extraordinary assistance of one of His angels, what had He not done for me had I given larger alms and kept more faithfully His holy laws?" We may well say after the example of this Saint : If so small an action merits of Our Lord so great a recompense, what would not a larger action merit? Our Lord will say to the just on the last day : "Come ye blessed of My Father possess the kingdom prepared for you. For I was hungry and you gave Me to eat, thirsty and you gave Me to drink, naked and you covered Me, sick and in prison and you came to Me ;" thus showing clearly how much He esteems good works even

the smallest, and how prodigious is their merit. If it is such a meritorious thing to give a morsel of bread, a glass of water, an old cloak that is useless to us, that Our Lord in presence of the universe will praise it with His own mouth, regard it as a pleasing service, acknowledge it as done to Himself, worthy of an eternal recompense of glory, of the never-ending possession of Himself, what must be the merit of greater and more difficult actions? What praise will be bestowed on him who shall have given all his wealth to the poor? who will have distributed those spiritual alms which are as far above corporal alms as the soul is above the body? What degree of honor will be reserved for the great actions of religion, adorations, praise, the holy Mass well said or well heard, confessions and communions well made, religious vows exactly observed? What recompense will noble acts of the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity obtain? Since this reward surpasses all our thoughts and words, we may say as much of the excellence and value of the acts which merit it.

VI. The fourth motive includes several other precious advantages which good works procure for man. By every good work he gains, besides all the treasures we have already enumerated, the pardon of some venial fault in the manner we have described in the preceding chapter, and the remission of part of the debt he owes to the divine justice. Moreover, he feels within him the solid peace and joy which naturally accompany a good action; the habit of virtue takes deeper root, its acts are henceforth performed with more promptitude and joy, he daily acquires greater power and facility in doing good, more sweetness in the exercise of good works, a certain interior unction which purifies the body, moderates the passions, restrains the imagination, fortifies the memory, enlightens the understanding, inflames the will, sweetens the yoke of Our Lord, and renders man capable of elevating himself to

heroic acts of virtue. If a man perform his actions ill, he loses all these great advantages ; instead of drawing profit from his labors he only incurs loss, disgusts and troubles of mind ; he commits faults which sully his soul, which oblige him to have recourse to confession and to do penance, which make the practise of virtue difficult to him and daily diminish his relish for divine things.

VII. Since good actions are so excellent and so useful, let us strive with all our might to perform our actions as well as we possibly can. Let us open our eyes, and consider our gains and losses. After all we have said, a wise man who desires his happiness will not need much logic to persuade him of the advantage of performing his actions well. I ask you if at each step, for each word, you were sure of gaining a hundred thousand dollars would, you remain inactive or mute? You, who for a trifling gain, labor day and night, wasting your best energies. What are you about? Since you can by each of your actions acquire immense treasures of eternal glory, why will you lose them by performing your actions badly? Excited by the consideration of the advantages you have already lost, strive with ardor and constancy to perform your actions with all possible perfection. Whatever thy hand findeth to do, says the Holy Ghost, do it earnestly. The hands of the just man ought to be like those of the Spouse, of whom it is said : Her arms are golden cylinders surrounded with the chrysolites of Tarsis. They are charged with precious stones and with all the riches of the sea. They move easily like a cylinder, that is, they are prompt to do good works with facility ; *they are of gold*, because the just do their good works in charity, which gives them their highest value. They are replenished with the chrysolites of Tarsis, because each good work is precious as a jewel, and bears the coloring of heaven like the hyacinth, that is, merits heaven as its guerdon. But what is still more

pleasing to the loving soul is, that each good action is for that soul a new and more abundant possession of Our Lord, in the state of grace, and will be the same eternally in that of glory. Besides, it is well to remark that, since you must always perform your ordinary actions in some manner, you must pray, you must say or hear Mass, you must obey your superiors and fulfil the duties of your charge · you must speak, you must eat, you must walk, you must sleep, you must do everything necessary for the perservation of life ; since you cannot avoid these things is it not incomparably better to do them perfectly than imperfectly? Is it not more advantageous to render your actions glorious to God and useful to yourself than to render them odious to Him and injurious to yourself? It does not take more time to do them well than to do them ill : it only requires a little more care and application of mind; if this appear difficult in the beginning, habit will soon make it easy ; and even if this difficulty should not diminish, remember the eternal recompense. Consider the attention with which the workman applies to his work, a painter to his picture, a weaver to a royal mantle, and think that you weave every day the robe of glory you shall wear in heaven with the Saints ; that all the actions you do are the warp and woof of its texture, labor then earnestly on this robe. Give to a work of such immense consequence, to an ornament destined to deck you forever, at least as much attention as workmen give to perishable things.

SECTION I.

WE OUGHT TO STRIVE TO PERFORM WELL OUR SMALLEST ACTIONS.

I. We should perform our smallest actions well.—II. Resolutions.

We have just said that all our actions should be well done, and we add that this is to be understood not only of

great, but even of the smallest actions. *Nothing lightly*, such was the device of Lucius Verus, which the Greeks explained very well by saying that nothing should be done negligently, but all with diligence; that nothing should be regarded as an accessory, but everything as a principal. And in reality, there is no action small, all are great, since there is not one, not a word, a look, a step, which being done with a good motive, does not merit the infinite treasures we have mentioned. Now who would regard as small an action by which immense riches can be acquired? Who has ever regarded the acquisition of an empire as child's play? Is it not looked upon as an action of the greatest importance, worthy of all possible application of mind? But ought not we with greater reason regard as of immense importance our words, our looks, our steps, our sleep, since each of these actions can merit for us the kingdom of God? No sensible man would treat an affair lightly on which depended the acquisition of an empire. Well, the Christian who has true faith and judgment ought in like manner to apply himself to do all his works perfectly, since by every action he may gain or lose a kingdom.

To enhance still more the merit of these actions, and to show that they are great, it suffices to say that God draws his glory from them, and often rather from small actions than from those which are great and shining before men. A look, a hair, are little things in appearance, and yet the Spouse says in the Canticles, that among the beauties of his Beloved, these inflamed His Heart most: "Thou hast wounded My Heart, My Sister, My Spouse; thou hast wounded My Heart with one of thy eyes, and with a hair of thy neck;" as if He said: All your perfections and attractions have great power over me, and I esteem them much, but I regard as the most charming of all, your eyes and your hair. Small actions are often more eloquent of love and fidelity than great ones. A painter finds it more

difficult to represent several persons distinctly in a miniature than in a large portrait. A watchmaker displays more talent in encasing a watch in a ring than in making a clock for a church. We know that the master-piece of Myrmecidus was not a colossus, nor a great statue, but a chariot for horses, which a fly covered with its wings, and a vessel in full sail that a bee hid in its wings, all exquisitely carved in ivory. It frequently happens that small actions are done with more interior spirit than great ones, because great actions naturally excite the mind to do them with care, while small actions inspire a certain negligence and contempt that can be surmounted only by an extraordinary effort, which must be the result of pure virtue. The Angelic Doctor teaches that a practised science is perfect in proportion as it applies itself carefully to the smallest particulars, because it is quite evident that if it be solicitous about the least details it will not neglect the more important parts. Aristotle places among the number of signs of a long life, the lines on the hand when they are long, deep and well marked, because if nature has extended its care to the smallest and least necessary things, and formed them so distinctly, it is very clear that she will have formed well the nobler parts and employed all her vigor to render them perfect. So we may say that the interior man needs much virtue to do little things with care and perfection, and when he acts thus with regard to small things he will not perform great ones negligently.

II. Let us then apply ourselves seriously to do well our least actions, and thus render them glorious to God and meritorious to ourselves ; *little things are as pleasing to God as great ones,*[1] says the Sage. The example nature gives us should excite us to this. Pliny, speaking of bees, says : "Nature shows her power most perfectly in the production of the smallest animals." "The Author of Nature," says

[1] Eccles. 29, 23.

St. Austin, "has created animals whose bodies are small, but whose senses are very powerful, and we have more reason to be astonished at the agility of a fly which flies, than at the size of a horse which trots ; and the work of an ant ought to excite more admiration than the strength of a camel that carries our burdens." St. Jerome, writing to Heliodorus of the virtues of Nepotian, says : "As we admire the Creator not only in the vastness of the heavens, the sun, the earth, the sea, but also in flies, gnats, worms, and animalculæ, of which we know not even the names, so the soul which truly loves God is equally attentive to great and to small things. Nepotian was careful to see that the altar was decorated, the walls dusted, the floor swept, the porter at his post, the sacristy neat, the vases polished, and all the ceremonies performed with the utmost exactitude ; he neglected nothing of his charge, great or small." Such has been the practice of all the Saints, as may be seen in their lives. It is said of St. Ignatius that he fulfilled no duty of religion without applying to it his whole mind, and that the ardor with which he performed even the smallest actions shone on his countenance, and sparkled in his eyes : so it was with other Saints. It is not without mystery that the Holy Ghost says in the Canticles, speaking of the just : *His head shines like the gold of Ophir,* [1] and adds : His arms *are cylinders of gold,* and even *his limbs are pillars of marble which rest on bases of gold.* By this He would teach us that the Saints perform with charity and perfection not only great and apparent actions, represented by the head, but also mediocre actions figured by the hands, and even lowly and earthly actions, represented by the feet. Let us strive to do the same, rendering all our works, even the smallest, precious as gold.

[1] Cant. V.

SECTION II.

CONDITIONS NECESSARY TO A GOOD ACTION.

I. It must be performed through a motive of virtue.—II. Charity must in some manner enter into it.—III. Excellent means of rendering our actions good.

I. We say in the first place, that the essential quality of a good action is, according to the opinion of all theologians and philosophers, that it be performed through a good motive; without this, whatever appearance it has, it is only the shadow and smattering of virtue: the act has its essence and reality in the motive. Moreover, it must possess all the qualities necessary to its perfection, otherwise it does not merit the name and glory of a virtuous action. Speaking on the subject, St. Thomas remarks that natural things do not derive all their perfection from their substance; they derive much of it from accidental things, as is seen in man, who does not derive all his beauty from his rational soul, but inherits much of it from his figure, complexion, and other qualities, without which his beauty would be imperfect: so moral things derive not all their perfection from the motive which is their substance; they receive part of it from the circumstances which accompany them, which are, as it were, merely accidental, but the retrenchment of which would nevertheless render them defective. The virtuous man works when and how he ought; he gives to his works all the conditions and circumstances essential to their perfection. The perfection of anything consists in the plenitude and assemblage of all the things its nature demands, and if any of these be absent the thing becomes imperfect or vicious. Goodness is the union of all the constituents of good, and evil is the result of the absence of any one of these constituents, says

St. Denis. The loss of an eye or a hand does not hinder a man from being a man, but it prevents his being a perfect man. The whole is composed by a union of the principal parts, hence by the absence of one part, it loses its perfection by losing its integrity. Now, the intention and the circumstances being the principals and the accessories of all human actions, form their moral goodness, it must therefore be concluded that to render actions good they must be accompanied by all the circumstances of time, place, order, manner, etc. A defect in a single circumstance imprints a stain. To be virtuous, says Aristotle, we must be most circumspect in our actions, and not err as regards time, place, manner or matter. St. Basil says that when we act, the prudence which directs all the virtues in their operations, ought to make us perform our actions at the proper time and without precipitation. Thus our exercises of piety and other practices, however good they may be, lose their value if we perform them not in the time, place and manner prescribed.

II. In the second place, it is not enough that the action be good, as we have explained; other qualities must be joined to render it deserving of the rich rewards to which we have alluded. All theologians concur in saying that sanctifying grace is the source of merit. Some say that this grace suffices without making a special offering of the action to God, because the state of grace confers the precious quality of a child of God, and causes all the good works done in that state to become resplendent as gold, pleasing to God and meritorious of eternal life. Others say that grace is not powerful enough to produce this grand effect of which it is the source, but that it is necessary to refer the work to God by a formal and precise act of charity which perfects in the action what grace commenced. This is much to ask of human weakness; but then, the recompense is immense since it is the eternal pos-

session of God. Other theologians think, with more probability, that all acts of supernatural virtues, as of faith, hope, infused moral virtues, done in the state of grace, merit of themselves eternal glory, even though charity do not directly contribute to them, because, being supernatural, they refer to charity; but that acts of acquired virtues are not so meritorious unless they be accompanied with acts of supernatural virtues, which latter become the root and source of the excellence and merit of acquired virtues. Finally, others think that a virtuous action, though done in the state of grace, does not merit the recompense of heaven, if it be not joined to the queen of virtues, and if charity do not refer it to God, at least virtually. We ought to have much deference for this sentiment, since it is sustained by St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure, two great lights of theology, two most consummate masters in the intelligence of the spiritual life, and two very great Saints. St. Thomas, treating this question says: "Eternal life consists in the enjoyment of God; the movement which most directly conducts the human soul to God is an act of charity, and the other acts of virtue conduct man to this, inasmuch as they are commanded by charity; thus the power and the right to heaven belong firstly, and chiefly, to charity, and secondly to the other virtues, inasmuch as they are dependent on charity and produced by her orders. The act of faith is meritorious, inasmuch as it is produced by charity, and so of fortitude, patience," etc.

To render an action meritorious, observes St. Bonaventure, it is not necessary that it should always be referred to God in an actual manner, by a motive of charity; the habitual manner suffices. Now, by this habitual reference I do not understand the habit of charity, which renders a man capable of thus referring his actions to God, but an actual reference made at the beginning of this action, or of another action of which this action is a consequence; for

example, if some one give away a hundred marks of silver for the love of God, and forget this motive after giving away the first mark, he should not cease to merit in distributing the other marks, though the remembrance of the motive escaped him ; but if he should commence an action of a different kind, he would be obliged to renew his intention in order to make this latter action meritorious. Just as Religious who have the intention of embracing the yoke of Jesus Christ for the love of God, merit by all the exercises and observances of the rule they have embraced, to which they apply in virtue of this first intention, unless indeed, which God forbid, this first intention be destroyed by a contrary one. As much cannot be said of acts which belong not to the rule, because the force of the original intention does not refer to them. Such are the words of the Seraphic Doctor ; but it must be observed, first, that by the habitual intention which he says is sufficient, he understands, as the text clearly shows, the intention which we ordinarily call virtual, and which is merely an actual intention taken in a less perceptible, or nearly imperceptible manner. An excellent performer on the lute can perform beautifully and speak to some one at the same time, or listen to others conversing, though it cannot be said that he does not attend to his performance, for his fingers could not follow so admirable an order if they were not guided by art, or if his mind were entirely distracted ; but the great habit he has already acquired enables him to perform even when he does not advert to it.

II. That different actions which have no moral connection, ought, in order to be meritorious, to be animated, each in particular, with a new intention. To elucidate this, it must be remembered that several actions are morally one, when they refer to the same end, though they may be naturally very different. During a repast one eats, drinks, cuts bread and meat ; now all these actions

are physically different, and yet they form but one action morally speaking, because they all tend to the same end, that is, to one's nourishment. So, when a professor goes to class to give a lesson, or a scholar to learn, all the actions done in the class, as speaking, listening, learning, writing, etc., though naturally different, are morally but one, because they all tend to the same end, which is, to teach us to learn. When therefore an action is morally one, it is sufficient to direct the intention at the commencement, and not essential to renew this intention during the action, though it would be well to renew it, and the merit of the action would thereby be increased ; but when actions are morally different, the intention must be renewed at the beginning of each action, otherwise they will not be meritorious, and our labor will be fruitless.

You may perhaps desire to know whether, in order to render all the actions of the day meritorious, it is necessary to propose to one's self a good intention at the beginning of each, or whether the general and particular intentions made in the morning suffice. To this I reply, that in order that an action done during the course of the day be vivified by the intention of the morning, it ought to have some bond to unite it to that intention. Now, how can this exist in actions, as at dinner, the conversation which follows it, walking, etc., which have not been even thought of in the morning intention, and which are done through necessity, because of the company, or for pleasure ? It is clear that as these actions did not occupy the mind when the intention was formed, they are done independently of it, and consequently are not influenced by it. Whoever wishes to merit by these actions ought to renew the intention. Thus we ought to reason on this subject, and thus we should act. Yes, you say, but this opinion is not certain, and to act thus would be very

constraining to the mind. I answer, that though the opinion of these two holy Doctors should not be certain—though the first, which is the gentler, should be the more probable—it is always certain that in doubtful things, and things of great importance, it is far better to keep on the surest side and follow the practice which is most perfect and advantageous.

III. For the rest, I add, that a still nobler and more sublime manner of rendering actions good and perfect is: 1, To abandon ourselves entirely into the hands of God as instruments, that He may do in and by us all He pleases; 2. To His Son Our Lord, who is in us as in His members, that He may consecrate us to God His Father, and consume us for His glory; for as His Divinity, in uniting itself to His Humanity, has divested it of its human personality, used it here below and still uses it in heaven to glorify His Father and execute His designs, to which order this Humanity submitted without contradiction, though in most difficult matters, and as by means of this union it lives a divine life and performs actions infinitely glorious to God. Jesus Christ wills the same in a measure by the union He has contracted with us. He wishes to refer us in this manner to the glory of His Father, and in this consists the grace of Christianity. For it is not precisely a grace of salvation, since several theologians think that the angels are saved, independently of Our Lord, through a grace bestowed by the pure liberality of God, without any consideration of the merits of His Son; and some have thought that a similar grace was conferred on Adam and Eve in the moment of their creation, with which they could save themselves if they pleased; but, properly speaking, salvation is a grace of returning to God; for the Incarnation and the grace which is a consequence of it, tend only to this, that Jesus Christ the Word Incarnate

should do by similitude in us, what the Word did in His Humanity ; that is, that He should empty us of ourselves, replenish us with His Divinity, imprint on us traces of His perfections ; that He should unite us to Himself and cause us to live a life divinely human ; that He should operate in us without resistance whatever He pleases, make us act in and by His spirit, render us to His Father to be employed in His service now and forever, an end from which we turned aside by the sin of Adam and our own sins, to seek our own glory and gratification. For as St. Paul says, "the grace of God Our Saviour hath appeared unto all men."[1] What is this grace of the Saviour ?—what is its object? St. Paul tells us in the following words : "It teacheth us that renouncing impiety and worldly desires, and all that is contrary to God in us, we should live soberly, justly and piously in this world and apply ourselves entirely to the practise of the virtues most glorious to Him, *always expecting the beatitude prepared for us*,"[2] and the glorious coming of the great God and Our Saviour Christ Jesus, when he shall deliver His Kingdom, that is, His elect, to God His Father ; when He shall be all in all, and reign absolutely over them, and when they shall become perfect and eternal organs of His glory. To perform our actions in an excellent manner, we must render ourselves docile to the movements of Our Lord, permit Him to rule us as the Head His members, that He may operate in and by us in the accomplishment of His will and the glory of His Father.

[1] Tit. 11, 14. [2] I. Cor. 15, 25.

SECTION III.

PARTICULAR MANNER OF RENDERING OUR ACTIONS GOOD.

I. The devil attacks us.—II. Before the action.—III. Remedies.—IV. During the action.—V. Lessening of attention.—VI. Remedies against vanity.—VII. Cooling of fervor.—VIII. Impatience.—IX. After the action.—X. Remedies.—XI. Not to seek praise.—XII. We must not yield to tepidity.

I. St Gregory the Great gives us excellent advice on this matter, and though he speaks only of actions good in themselves, as prayer and alms deeds, we will apply his doctrine to indifferent actions, and show how they may be rendered good.

We should be aware, writes this holy Doctor, that our arch enemy attacks our good works in three ways, in order to make what is good in the eyes of men, bad in the eyes of the Sovereign Judge. He attacks us before the action, during the action, and after the action.

The demon lays his snares when a man is on the point of doing some action to corrupt the intention ; because if the action be vitiated in its source, it cannot be pure. The prophet Jeremy mentions this attack when he says : *Her enemies are lifted above her head, (Lam.* 1. 5.*)*

II. To elucidate this more clearly, we say that the devil in the first place, strives to make us perform our actions through custom ; because he knows that if he succeed in this, they shall be neither glorious to God nor profitable to ourselves, thence he seeks to distract us, to turn our attention to other objects, to hide from us the importance of a good action, and prevent our thinking of what we are about to do. 2. If we wish to propose to ourselves some intention, he suggests a bad one, as vanity, self-seeking,

temporal interest. 3. If we propose to ourselves a good intention, he strives to make it less perfect, or at least to cause us to form it with negligence and tepidity. Thus the enemy attacks us at the commencement of our actions.

III. Behold the remedies; 1, never to regard an action as of small importance; all actions are great as we have proved. We must consider what God demands in each action, that in doing it well we procure Him much glory and ourselves great advantages; that for these ends He wills we should apply ourselves entirely to do it well, without thinking of anything else while we do it. 2. The mind thus prepared and filled with these thoughts must direct the intention before beginning the action. We must be careful never to commence an action without forming a good intention; for the intention is the soul of the action, and gives it its value and price, thence we should pause before beginning an action; in order to have time to direct the intention: we must not grudge the time given to this, since all depends on it. Thus we read that one of the ancient Fathers was accustomed to reflect some moments before beginning an action: when asked the reason of this, he replied that a good intention being the source of the goodness of our actions, he paused to form a good intention, thereby to render his actions good and meritorious, like an archer who before darting off an arrow takes his aim; thus should we act. *David commanded that they should teach the children of Juda the use of the bow, as it is written in the Book of the Just.*[1] Yes, truly, it is the science of the Just and of the elect; it is one of the principal foundations of the spiritual life; all, and in a special manner, beginners, ought to learn the use of the bow, that is, to direct all their thoughts, words and actions to the great end of the glory of God. 3. In directing the intention we must always be careful to form a good one, and advance

[1] II. Kings. i. 18.

from good to better till we reach the most pure and perfect. We should direct our intentions, not with tepidity and indifference, but with ardor and courage ; because the more pure and noble our intentions are, and the more lovingly and vigorously they are directed, the more pleasing they are to God and the more profitable to ourselves. If you ask what are the noblest and most perfect intentions, I shall answer your question in the following chapter. It suffices for us at present to know that we ought as far as possible to propose them to ourselves in all our works ; but it must be observed that to choose always the most perfect, it is necessary to be very attentive to the movements of the soul, for it is extremely difficult, on account of the artifices of self-love, to have this perfect purity of intention : often you may imagine that to be done for the sole glory of God which is vitiated by very different motives. Let each examine the desires of his heart, says St. Jerome, and he will discover how rare it is to find a soul perfectly faithful, which never seeks human glory and applause. O how difficult it is to be content with the approval of God alone, and to consider only Him in everything. There is nothing more tender than the eye, there is nothing more delicate than the intention.

IV. St. Gregory thus admonishes us : When the demon cannot poison our intention, he acts like a thief who, not being able to attack a traveller in the house, awaits him on the road to surprise him ; when he cannot attack the good work in its source, that is, in the intention, he strives to vitiate it while it is being done ; and he who is not constantly on his guard, and does not diffide in self, will fall into this snare, and lose in a moment all he had gained previously. The Royal Prophet thus alludes to this species of snare : "In the way wherein I walked they have hidden a snare for me."[1] Jeremias shows it to us under the

[1] Ps. cxli. 4.

figure of the four score men who, going to the temple in robes of penitence, bearing in their hands incense and other offerings to offer in the house of the Lord, were deceived by a traitor named Ismahel, who coming before them with sweet words, coaxed them from the right road and led them into a place where he slew them.[1] Thus will the demon deceive us if we be not on our guard ; he will compass this by exciting us to vanity or causing us to continue, through human respect, what we commenced for God. "Very often," says St. Gregory, "the applause of men adulterates our good intentions, and though we did not propose to ourselves this bad motive in the beginning, we frequently rest in it with pleasure. Sometimes we go to table through the necessity we are under of satisfying the cravings of nature, but ere long gluttony furtively enters, and though we begin through necessity we finish with voluptuousness." In like manner we sometimes commence a good work through charity and finish through vanity. The devil changes his plan of attack ; now he directs his batteries against the intention, and now against the actions ; he strives to diminish our diligence, to distract our minds by suggesting irrelevant thoughts, to make our fervor fitful and inconstant. Again, he attacks us by tempting us to anger, chagrin and impatience, because of the trouble we must take to do the action, and he makes us desire soon to see the end of it ; then we hurry it on to completion.

V. The means of escaping these snares are, first, to close all the avenues to vanity and human respect, considering God as the sole judge of our action, since He alone will recompense it if well done, and punish it if ill done. Beware of doing your good works to be seen by men, says Our Lord, otherwise you shall have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Repress this desire of the es-

[1] Jerem. xli. 5.

teem of men, it is but smoke ; their praises cannot render us better, nor can their censures render us worse. It is of the approval of God that we should make account, for *that* can effectually elevate or abase us, bestow upon us glory or infamy. St. Chrysostom, explaining these words which the Scripture says of King Josiah : *He did what was just in the sight of the Lord*, says : "This wise and virtuous king did what was right in the sight of the Lord ; that is to say, he performed his actions for the glory of God, unlike the Pharisees who published their alms with the sound of trumpet, who strove to have an external appearance of mortification when they fasted, who prayed at the corners of streets and in market places, that all their actions might win them glory before men." Then he uses this just and beautiful comparison : Those who run at the games, should the emperor come to see them run, would make more account of his presence and his opinions of them than those of others ; and you who know and confess that God and His angels are present at your course, that He is there as Judge and rewarder, you cast your eyes on your equals, you are more eager to please them than to please God. What is the result? It is that after many pains and labors, so far from having earned a crown, you have gained only smoke. Would you not think the man a fool who, having the king for the spectator of his actions, takes no notice of him, but seeks the applause of the rabble? When Abraham was about to sacrifice his son, he taught us by his example, to whose judgment we should defer ; he hid his design as much as possible, not declaring it even to his wife ; he chose the time of night that he might leave the house with greater secrecy ; he took two servants, but he made them remain with his ass at the foot of the mountain ; finally, he chose for this sacrifice the summit of a mountain. Why all this mystery? Why avoid with such caution the eyes of men ? Why separate from his servants?

Why communicate nothing of the business to his wife? The universe was not worthy to witness so memorable an action. The signification of the name of the mountain answers all these questions : it is called *Moriah*, which means, *God sees me:* Abraham gave it this name as if he would say, that since God saw his sacrifice that was enough ; that rendered it unnecessary that men should see it. In like manner it ought to suffice for us that God sees what we do. If it happen, as it often may, that we perform our actions before men, we need not do them *for* men, nor think of men at all while we do them ; we need think only of God for whom we perform them, and whom we should desire to please. When you write to a friend, though many persons be in the same room with you, you do not regard them, but say what you have to say to your friend, and reply to his questions. To avoid danger it is advisable to do our actions in secret as much as possible, that God alone may be witness of them. Our Lord expressly recommends this when He admonishes us to retire into our closets to pray ; He goes still farther when he says : Let not your left hand know what your right hand does ; He would say as St. Chrysostom explains, that the very person who does a good action should ignore it as much as possible, that the very hands which did it should appear ignorant of it. The lion, says St. Ephrem, effaces the foot-prints he makes on the sand that the hunter should be unable to trace him : the spiritual man should as far as possible conceal the knowledge he has of his good works and forget it, that he may preserve them. A hidden treasure is more secure than one that is exposed to the gaze of every body ; a prudent traveller will not carry his money in his hand, especially when he passes dangerous roads, otherwise he should soon be eased of it. Good works are so precious, they excite such great envy in our enemies, that they im-

prove every occasion of robbing us of them ; hence we ought to hide them.

VI. In the second place, to prevent remissness of attention, the thoughts must be carefully guarded and not permitted to wander here and there, but kept fixed on the business in hand. "Do what you do," was constantly repeated by an attendant, to the officiating priest at a Roman sacrifice, "and think of nothing else." The mysterious animals Ezekiel saw were full of eyes, to typify the extreme vigilance with which we should perform our actions. St. Austin puts in the category of the qualities of prudence, intelligence of the present, which St. Thomas calls circumspection ; this circumspection binds the mind to the thing which is being done ; it looks cautiously around in order to avoid all that may be a hindrance, and adopts whatever may be of use. This is one of the most important points of the spiritual life ; those who desire to advance rapidly and merit much, must watch carefully over it ; we must apply ourselves entirely to the affair we are engaged in, hinder our memory from recalling anything else, our understanding from reasoning on anything else, and our will from desiring any occupation foreign to what we are doing. The fundamental reason of this truth is, that God desires that we should will the action in hand, that it may be glorious to Him and meritorious to us ; the application of all our faculties is necessary for the achievement of this end : He wills and asks of us only one thing at a time : the present action is the only means by which He wills to come and unite Himself to us, and by which we can go to Him to unite ourselves to Him ; it is the only way by which He shares His gifts with us and receives our homage ; by it He enters into the possession of us and we enter into the possession of Him. He glorifies Himself in us and makes us operate our salvation. All this can be done only by the

present action, not by past or future actions ; those have passed away, these have not yet come, and perhaps never will. Now what *is not*, cannot serve for a base or foundation to what *is*. If our salvation depend in some manner, on actions past and future, it depends not on them, inasmuch as they are past and future, but inasmuch as they have been or shall be present.

Let us then resolve to consecrate ourselves entirely to what we are doing, courageously repressing all the thoughts and cares that refer to other objects, however good in themselves, by remembering that they come not from God since they come out of season. Let us attach our memory to the present action by the sweet and tranquil thought that it is the will of God ; that he desires nothing else of us at this moment, that He designs to glorify Himself, in and by us, through this action, and to produce the admirable effects we have already detailed. Let us apply our understanding to give all attention to do well the present action, to perform it with God and for God, and with the pure and elevated intentions of which we shall treat in the ensuing chapter. Finally, let us force our will to will this action and no other ; let us direct our intention with care ; let us avail ourselves of this action as a means of uniting us to God and enjoying Him ; let us divest it of its created nature, and taste in it the uncreated being, which grace and the will of God confer on it. It is for these ends that our Lord so often says to us *Take care*,[1] *be attentive, see and watch*, to perform your actions well.

But alas! our corruption is so great, our misery so profound that our memory, our understanding and our will, if not constrained to attend to what we are about, will yield to weariness seek some new object, hoping to find in it their contentment and beatitude. Thus, during prayer our minds will wander to our studies, and at recreation

[1] Luke xvii. 3, Mark xii. 9 and 33.

we shall begin to think of something foreign to the duty we are engaged in. Future things commonly make more impression on our souls than present things: this is a great error, since the beatitude of our memory during this life consists in fixing itself in the remembrance of God, and on what He wills of us; that of the understanding in regarding Him as the first Being and the Sovereign Truth, and doing what He enjoins; that of the will in willing what He wills, uniting itself to Him, and thus possessing and enjoying Him as far as is possible in this life. All this is obtained by a single action well done, but when we forget this, or permit ourselves to be distracted by other thoughts, we lose the possession of God, at least during this time. This is a very pernicious artifice of the demon, the mortal enemy of our happiness, who in presenting to our minds future things as necessary, useful, pleasing or difficult, enchants our faculties by these objects, and thus detaches them from the present action that we may not do it well; by this means he robs God of the glory and us of the merit the action would produce, if well done; the following actions also suffer, for certainly we cannot prepare well for them, or obtain grace to do them as we ought, by performing negligently the present action.

Whoever then desires to make great progress in virtue and acquire great treasures of merit, must give his undivided attention to the present action without thinking of that which follows, abandoning the future to the sweet and paternal Providence of God. If for love of Him they withdraw their thoughts from all other things to apply to the affair in hand, as He desires, He will always give them graces necessary for the occasions in which He may place them, and the business He may require them to transact. He will even give them more, that they may act with higher perfection. Our Lord told those destined to bear witness to Him before tyrants, not to think beforehand

of what they should say, *because*, said He, *you shall then be inspired as to what you ought to say.* He says *then*, because it is not necessary to bestow this grace till occasion requires it. What our Lord says of the confession of faith may be understood of all other actions, that is, while doing anything, we should not think of what we may have to do hereafter, but give our whole attention to what we are about, with a firm hope and assurance that God will give us grace to do what follows, and what we refuse to think of before the right time; but He will not give us these graces till we actually require them, for this would be to no purpose, since they are not given for the present action: it is for this reason they are called actual graces. Thus we read of many martyrs, that they were weak and timid before suffering, and in this disposition we know it had been impossible for them to expose themselves to fire, to the wheel, to the wild beasts; but when occasion required, they became strong as lions, they rejoiced in the midst of the most cruel torments, because they received strength from on high; they were replenished with efficacious graces, of which they were before devoid, because they had no need of them.

VII. To hinder our fervor from cooling, we should from time to time, during the course of the action, especially if it be of long duration, renew the intention formed at the commencement, striving to finish this action courageously, to correspond faithfully to every degree of grace given us, without rendering one unfruitful. One action done in this manner produces more effect in a soul, and is more meritorious than a hundred others: a rich merchant often gains more in one voyage than a poor one does in his whole life. The excellence and merit of actions depend greatly on the efforts made by the will to do them well, and to co-operate fully with the grace of God; hence we sometimes see great sinners advance more in one day

than some just persons, and even some religious, do in many years, though the latter receive daily the graces of God, and do good works, because they employ only part of the graces God gives them, and render the rest useless; while the former march with rapid strides by their perfect correspondence with grace. The first of the angels in a little time performed acts of virtue so noble and perfect, that he rendered to God more glory and merited a greater recompense than all the other angels did in the same period, and than all men in many years. The Holy Virgin accomplished all her actions with so much virtue and excellence, that, as we have elsewhere said, she advanced more by a single action than the greatest saint did during his whole life. St. Bernardine of Sienna says, that by the act of faith and obedience she made in consenting to the words of the angel, she merited more than all other creatures ever have or ever shall merit. It is not then, precisely, the time or the number that render actions meritorious, but the application of mind, and the ardor with which the will co-operates with the grace of God

VIII. To counteract the chagrin and impatience which labor and difficulties excite in us, we must strive to do all our actions with gentleness of mind, and a sentiment of interior joy; we should imitate God, the first of all causes, who ought to be the rule of all others, and who does all His actions with sovereign contentment and infinite joy. The Lord rejoices in His works, says David. Jesus Christ His Son, the Increated Wisdom, speaking of Himself, says: I was with My Eternal Father forming all things: and was delighted every day, playing before Him at all times; playing in the world.[1] I did all My works with delight. Moreover, to dissipate the clouds of sadness and *ennui*, remember that in doing a good work that is painful to you, you have a very great subject of consolation, since

[1] Proverbs.

by it you honor God, which is for you a great honor, and you amass infinite treasures of eternal riches. It is for the devil and his adherents who enkindle, for this world and the next, the fires of the divine justice to punish crimes, to be sad, as St. Francis well observes; but the children of God who expect heaven for their recompense, ought always to be joyous and content. Hence the Holy Ghost so often in the Scripture invites them to rejoice: "Ye just, rejoice in the Lord, and exult: let the heart of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Always rejoice in the Lord; again, I say to you, rejoice." It should be remarked here, touching the difficulties experienced in the practice of good works that, generally speaking, they render them more meritorious and perfect, not by themselves, strictly speaking, for we know that the actions of the blessed in heaven are perfect and excellent in the highest degree, and yet they are done not only without pain, but even with facility and joy. Hence Aristotle teaches that pleasure perfects the action, because when we do it with joy, we do it with more attention, ardor and constancy; and far from augmenting the merit and perfection of the action, very often difficulties diminish them, because they lessen the ardor, obscure and trouble the mind, and diminish the liberty which is the source of merit. But when, notwithstanding all the pain the soul experiences, all the thorns it encounters, it practises virtue from pure and high motives, generously overcoming all obstacles, then the difficulty increases the merit; because the soul earns a new crown by the victory over an enemy not a little terrible to human weakness and self-love; I mean the trouble the action costs.

Finally, to act with moderation, consider that it is not necessary to do an action quickly, but to do it well. The perfection of a painter consists not in making many pictures, but in making good ones and representing nature as

nearly as possible ; for a single well painted picture will bring more than fifty poor paintings, even though the latter be magnificently framed : in like manner, your perfection consists not in doing your actions quickly but in doing them with all the perfection their respective natures demand.

IX. Sometimes when the devil cannot vitiate an action in the commencement or during the course, he strives to deteriorate it towards the end, as St. Gregory observes. They will watch my heel,[1] says the Royal Prophet, that is, as the same holy Doctor interprets, they will seek to destroy my action towards the end, which is figured by the heel, the extremity of the body. Now the devil seeks to corrupt our actions at the end in three manners : 1. By vanity and a false joy which excite him who has done a good action to self-esteem and self-complacency, attributing to himself the glory of it, and saying in his heart these foolish words : "It is my hand and my strength that have done this, and not the Lord's?"[2] 2. By self-love, which excites him to publish his action, to prefer it to the actions of others, to strive to make it known, esteemed and praised. 3. By tepidity, growing cold in the exercise of good works as though we had already done enough.

X. To repress the first sentiments of this, we must be intimately persuaded of this great truth, that if there be any good in our actions it is by the grace and assistance of God that we have done it, and say with David : "The right hand of the Lord hath wrought power, the right hand of the Lord hath exalted me, the right hand of the Lord hath signalized its strength." We must then thank Him with all our heart for having given us this grace ; referring to him the glory of this action, like the four and twenty ancients of the Apocalypse who, prostrating themselves with profound respect before the throne of the

[1] Ps. lv. 7. [2] Deut. xxxii. 27.

Lamb, cast their crowns at His feet and adored him, saying : Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive the glory and honor of all our good works, because Thou hast created all. Thou art the just and chief cause of them ; we act only after Thee, and we cannot merit anything without Thy help. In fine, we must ask pardon for any defects we may have committed during this action.

XI. To repress the second temptation we must hide the good work as much as possible, and never seek praise. A good work produces two excellent effects : it procures profit and honor ; God who is its joint author with man, and who contributes much more to it than man, leaves man the whole profit, reserving to Himself only the honor, in which too He allows man to participate. God asks for Himself only the honor of which the good work is worthy before creatures, and reserves to Himself to honor and praise the just man who has done it. He will honor and praise him on the judgment day before the assembled world, and He will continue to praise him for all eternity in heaven. Since God acts so bountifully with man, it is reasonable that man should not refuse His demands, and hence man should not publish his good works or seek to be praised for them unless he wishes to lose the fruit of them ; for he who seeks to be applauded for his virtuous actions loses not only the profit of them but also the praise he should otherwise receive from God. The hen loses her egg by her cackling. King Ezekias showed his treasures with some sentiments of vanity to the ambassadors of the King of Babylon, and God immediately told him by His Prophet that, in punishment of this fault, the kings of Babylon would one day seize these riches and transport them to their city. Origen observes that while Jochabed kept her son Moses hidden, she preserved him ; but as soon as she ceased to hide him she was obliged to expose him to death on the Nile. Inasmuch as your good work

is hidden it is in security ; if you display it you run great risk of losing it. But if it should come to be known, and that you are praised for it, remember that men are bad judges, that they often praise what is censurable, and blame is laudable ; that commonly their praises proceed from their ignorance : unacquainted with the nothingness of the creature and his impotence for good, they see only the shell, as it were, and not what gives essence and power to the action which is hidden in the depth of the heart, and which is properly the only laudable part ; consequently they cannot accurately judge whether an action is worthy of praise or blame. When you are praised, imitate the Queen of heaven and earth who, hearing the praises and benedictions given her by St. Elizabeth, referred all the glory thereof to God, saying : My soul doth magnify the Lord ; as if she had said ; You praise me, you bless me, you call me the Mother of the Lord : but I praise, I bless, I glorify the same Lord, and acknowledge Him to be the author of all the good found in me. Act like men truly humble, who are filled with astonishment when any one seems to praise or esteem them, and who listen only with pain and confusion to the language of applause. When I was exalted, says David, I was humbled and troubled. St. Thomas makes a very judicious remark on this subject concerning the Holy Virgin : there is nothing more astonishing to a humble soul than to hear its own praise ; and because astonishment renders the mind attentive, the Angel Gabriel wishing to dispose that of the Blessed Virgin to listen attentively to what he had to say touching the mystery of the Incarnation, began his discourse by these memorable words : "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women ;" instead of disclosing to her at once that she was chosen to be Mother of God, which glorious quality is the source of all prerogatives

which elevate her incomparably above all other creatures. This model of humility hearing the title of honor given her by the Angel, and which she merited so well, was troubled thereat, says the Holy Scripture ; because praises always surprise humble souls. St. Ignatius, the martyr, said : Whoever praises me wounds me, and far from pleasing me causes me displeasure. It is related of St. Ephrem that he always avoided the praises of men as much as he could, and when he could not prevent them, he blushed with confusion, cast his eyes downwards and became so agitated that he was covered with sweat, and could not utter a word.

XII. In fine, to avoid yielding to tepidity and remissness after your action, call to mind the example of St. Paul and his words : " I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching towards those that are before me : I run incessantly by the ardor of my desires and by my works towards the end of my career, to attain the felicity of heaven." St. Paul here alludes to those who run at the public games, who never stop in their course nor look behind them, but run forward with eyes fixed on their destined crown, and arms stretched out to seize it. Thus did St. Paul and thus did all the Saints do ; they felt the infinite importance of their salvation ; they knew the immense treasures they could acquire every hour, every moment, that the time given them is very short ! hence they ran without ceasing, they pressed forward without remissness. The just man never believes himself to have attained perfection, says St. Bernard, he never says it is enough, he always hungers and thirsts after justice ; he never rests, he walks incessantly and with rapid strides. We must act in the same manner after a good action ; we must immediately commence another, and always press forward

without losing time or courage. There are three sorts of men whom God hates, says St. Austin : those who remain where they are, those who go back, and those who go astray. O how great an evil it is to look behind! The wife of Lot for having done it lost the life which had been saved from the flames of Sodom ; it is not without reason that she was changed into a pillar of salt, that her example might cure fools and instruct the wise. Remember Lot's wife, said Our Lord, look not behind lest you become a sharer in her misfortune.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OF THE GOOD INTENTION—ITS IMPORTANCE.

We have already said in a summary way that to render our actions good and meritorious, it was absolutely necessary to do them with an upright intention ; we shall in this chapter treat at greater length of what regards purity of intention.

All the doctors and masters of spiritual life agree in teaching that the intention is the form and life of our actions, that it gives them their value and excellence, so that such as is the intention such will be the action : if our intention be good, if it be very good, if it be very elevated, our action, though small in itself, becomes like our intention, and is raised to the same degree of perfection ; if the intention be low and bad, our action is the same, however brilliant it may appear in the eyes of men. It is with the intention as with those machines which raise gross blocks of stone or ugly pieces of wood, that would otherwise always remain on the ground. A glass of water is but a very little thing, and yet whoever gives it to a poor man, with a good intention, shall not lose his reward, says

Jesus Christ. There are no actions lower than eating, drinking, and sleeping; they are common to us with beasts; in themselves they are purely terrestrial; yet ennobled by a good intention they enter heaven, they reach the throne of God to impetrate new graces and an eternal recompense. On the other hand, a man may fast daily on bread and water, give all his goods to the poor, convert all sinners by his preaching, and for want of a good intention all these great and magnificent actions will be without merit, and instead of rendering their performer worthy of recompense, will render him deserving of punishment. It is not the sufferings that made the martyrs, as the holy Fathers observe, but the end for which they bore them. Our Lord was crucified with two thieves, says St. Austin, each was fastened to a cross, but the cause of their death was very different; the impious may die with the martyr, but not like the martyr; what makes the martyr is, not the torment but the cause. God vigorously reprehending the Jews, who offered Him sacrifices with bad intentions, says to them by Isaiah: Whoever immolates an ox is, before me, by the bad disposition of his heart, as one who would kill a man; whoever sacrifices a lamb, is, as if he should brain a dog, and he that remembereth incense to burn in my honor, with a hypocritical mind, is as if he should bless an idol.[1] What terrible words! They manifest all the malignity of a bad intention, since it can render a sacrifice, which is exteriorly a good and most holy action, comparable to two of the most enormous sins, homicide and idolatry. An ill set eye disfigures the whole face, so the best actions may be corrupted by a vicious intention.

And effectually, it is the will that gives value to the gift, which made Seneca say: "The heart enlarges little things, elevates the lowest things, ennobles the vilest, as the intention of the heart may abase and degrade the greatest

[1] Isaiah 66. 3.

and most precious." It is not by magnificent victims that God is honored; good people honor Him, though they present only a little wheat, while bad people cannot propitiate Him, though they ensanguine His altars with the blood of hecatombs. A small present made, with a good heart, touches us more than a magnificent present made through some sinister motive. We are more grateful to him who gives us a little present willingly, with a truly royal heart, and had given us more were it in his power—who gives not only with affection but with a sort of passion, who regards it as a favor when we accept his gift—than to one who gives us great things less gracefully. If he hesitate, if he give only with regret and through force; if he boast of his gifts, he has given to his vanity, and not to me, says the same philosopher: such a gift, however great, loses its value by the baseness of the donor's sentiments and intentions, while the smallest gift becomes great by the nobility of the intention. Our Lord said: "The light of thy body is thy eye," if the eye be simple the whole body will be lightsome; if on the contrary the eye be evil, all will go wrong, the foot will take false steps, the head will hurt itself, the whole body will be exposed to falls. The holy Fathers say that Our Lord here designed to speak of force of the intention whether for good or evil, and to show that as the eye guides the members and directs all the movements of the body, so the intention governs all our actions. The single eye is the good intention which ennobles all our actions, even the most indifferent, by rendering them precious in the eyes of God; the evil eye is the bad intention which obscures all our works by making them works of darkness; so that as one may judge of the disposition and health of the whole body by the eye, as Hippocrates remarks, so one may judge the actions by the intentions. Hence, the Spouse, wishing to describe and praise the charms of His Beloved, praises

chiefly her eyes, which are her intentions, and regards them as the source of all that is beautiful and perfect in her : "Thou art all beautiful, My love. Thou art beautiful, thy eyes are as the eyes of doves." He compares her eyes to those of the dove for three reasons : first, because in the old law, according to the opinion of many, when a dove was about to be sacrificed the priest considered particularly the eyes ; if they were beautiful and pure, he regarded the whole bird as beautiful and fit for the sacrifice : thus, as we have already said, it is our intentions that ought to decide the judgment made on our works. Secondly, because the dove is the symbol of purity, simplicity and love, qualities which shine in the intentions which true spouses propose to themselves. Thirdly, because the word used in the Hebrew to designate this innocent bird, signifies also to carry away by force, and some translate the text : Thy eyes are as the eyes of doves, thus : Thou hast the eyes of the dove, My Beloved. I mean, pure intentions in all thou dost ; hence thy eyes are ravishing, and by the purity and sincerity of thy intentions thou hast wonderfully captivated and ravished my heart.

Explaining these words of Job : *On what are these bases established.* St. Gregory shows the importance of the intention : The bases of each soul, says this Father, are the motives by which it acts ; for, as the edifice is sustained by pillars, and pillars by their bases, so the mystic edifice of our salvation is grounded on virtues, and virtues on good intentions.[1] And as it is written that no one can lay any other foundation than that which is laid, Christ Jesus, the bases are on their true and solid foundation when the intentions rest on Him. In vain do bases support tall columns and columns high edifices ; if the bases be not secured on a stable and immovable foundation the whole edifice, however beautiful and lofty, will certainly

[1] D. Gregor. Moral. lib. 28, cap. 6.

fall, and the higher it is the more complete will be its ruin. We must not, then, regard what the bases sustain, but on what they lean ; because God searches the hearts of men, He judges not only the works but the intentions with which they are performed. Long before St. Gregory, St. Austin had said in the same sense : The intention makes the good work ; be not over attentive to what a man does, but consider what end he proposes to himself in his action, to what object he directs it. The vessel goes from one side to another as the helm directs it. The action is guided by the intention, which impresses on it its good or bad qualities and paints its colors.

SECTION I.

PARABLES AND HISTORIES FROM THE GOSPEL TO CONFIRM THIS TRUTH.

I. Parable of the leaven.—II. The workmen of the vineyard.—III. The woman afflicted with an issue.—IV. The widow's mite.

I. The first parable we will quote is that of the leaven which Our Lord thus gives : The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened. This leaven signifies the intention ; for as paste without yeast, however good and abundant the flour may be, is insipid, cold and as it were dead, but when the yeast thoroughly impregnates it, it heats, vivifies and expands it, rendering it savory and fit to make bread : so every action however great and excellent it may appear, is worthless if the intention be not good, and is of great value when the intention is good. If the leaven be not mingled with all parts of the dough, the part in which it is not, possesses neither life nor heat ; so the action, word or thought, which during the course of the day will not have been animated by

a good motive is dead, and lost. Hence, we must be very careful to work in this mysterious leaven, the good intention, to these three measures of meal, which are our thoughts, our words and our actions, and knead them thoroughly with it, that nothing may be lost to us.

II. The kingdom of heaven is like to a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard, and agreed with them as to the hire. He went out about the third hour, and hired others, and did the same at the sixth hour, and the ninth hour, and even at the eleventh hour, and sent to work all whom he had hired. At the end of the day, he commanded them to be paid their hire, *beginning with the last*, and all received the same wages. Theologians teach that the end of this parable is to show us that in bestowing the eternal recompense, God will not consider precisely the length and fatigue of the labor, but the good will and ardor of the affections, as is clearly seen in the payment of the workers : the last receive as much as the first, they are even paid before them, though they worked but little, only one hour in the cool of the evening, and the others had supported all the heat and fatigue of the day, as they complained : These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the heats. The cause of this equality of salary in such a great inequality of labor is, that the intentions of the last workmen were more pure than those of the first, and by this means they wrought as much in one hour as the first did in a whole day.

III. A woman who had been diseased for twelve years, and had wasted all her substance on physicians without being able to obtain any relief, seeing Jesus pass by, came behind him, touched the hem of His garment, and was immediately healed. Our Lord knowing what had passed, exclaimed aloud : *Who is it that touched Me?* The apostles

answered : Master, the multitudes throng and press Thee, and dost Thou say : Who touched me ? I know well that some one has touched Me, replied Jesus, for I felt that virtue went out from me to that person. The woman hearing these words cast herself at His feet and publicly declared all that had happened to her. We learn thence that though a great many touched Our Lord, He attended only to one, because the rest touched Him corporally and merely by chance, as persons who, following Him with impetuosity, crowded round Him and crushed one another ; but this woman touched Him not so much with the body as with the soul by great faith, profound humility, firm confidence and an upright intention. Thus St. Austin says : Many touch Our Lord by seeming to do much for Him, but few touch Him with true faith and sincere devotion. It may happen that among several Christians who pray together in a church, several religious who are occupied at the same time in a duty prescribed by rule, Our Lord will make account of the prayers and actions of but one ; those of the others may be worthless before Him, because they are not done with application of mind and purity of intention ; they have only the appearance of goodness, and serve but to press and fatigue Him.

IV. St. Mark relates that Our Lord being in the temple near the treasury into which alms were cast, saw several rich persons throw in large pieces of silver, and afterwards a poor widow who threw in two mites. Our Lord thence took occasion to establish the great principle of which we speak, by saying to His disciples : " Amen, I say to you, this poor widow hath cast in more than all the others ;" yet she had given but two mites while they had given handfulls of money. What can be the cause of this strange judgment of Our Lord? It is clear that there is here no question of the exterior, for under this aspect the rich gave much more than the widow ; what gave value to her gift was what

passed in her soul, that is, the intention. Hence St. Cyprian says : Our Lord judged of the widow's gift not by its material value, but by the good will ; He regarded not how much she gave, but with what affection she gave it ; and He said that she gave more than all the others. This example clearly shows how much the good intention augments or diminishes the value of the action, since it made two mites more precious than many pieces of gold, and that without it gold crowns are less valuable than farthings. It shows also that many by small actions gain much, while others by great actions merit but little. Yes, says St. Ephrem, some who do least merit most ; the just, by actions trifling in appearance, gain the heart of God more efficaciously than others who undertake great things, because God regards far less the apparent greatness and multitude of the actions than the will. He considers not so much the action as the intention. The story of the poor widow of the Gospel excludes all doubt on this subject, since she merited more by her two farthings than the rich did by their sumptuous offerings.

In this respect the conduct of God is entirely different from that of men. When they buy or sell, they care little about the intention of the merchant ; whether it be good or bad, the merchandise neither increases nor decreases in value. God, on the contrary, in the contract He makes with us regards chiefly the intention. It is according to the intention that He values the action. God showed this difference to Isaiah by Samuel when He sent him to the house of Isaiah to anoint one of his sons King of Israël : Isaiah having presented the eldest, the Lord said to Samuel : "Look not on his countenance, nor on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him, nor do I judge according to the look of man ;" for man seeth the things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart. Herein, says St. Gregory of Nazianzen, God manifests excellently His no-

bleness and the special love He bears us, since He measures not the gift we offer Him by the greatness of the action, but by the greatness of our affection and our power. From this we may draw an important instruction which is full of sweet consolation, that no one is too poor to offer God presents which are very pleasing to Him ; because however poor he may be, he always has a heart in which he can find them. If your coffers and your purse be empty, your heart and your will may always furnish what is needful. St. Gregory the great says : No one goes empty-handed to God whose heart is replenished with good will. We can always find something in the heart ; it is from this coffer that the poor widow of the Gospel drew what so greatly amplified her two mites. Let us follow her example, performing our actions with the same devotion and the same ardor ; let us offer to God with good and perfect intentions our two mites, that is, as the Saints interpret, our body and our soul with all their works, that all may deserve to be rewarded and esteemed by Christ Jesus Our Lord and Saviour.

SECTION II.

WHAT THE GOOD INTENTIONS WE SHOULD PROPOSE TO OURSELVES ARE.

I. Terrestrial intentions.—II. Celestial intentions.—III. Divine intentions IV. Those are the most just.—V. The most pleasing and glorious to God.—VI. The most perfect.

I. Good intentions may be divided into three classes. The first, we shall style terrestrial and temporal, as when one fasts, prays, gives alms or does any other good work to obtain of God some temporal good, as recovery of health, the gaining of a law-suit, the success of a journey, etc. These intentions are less good and perfect because their

object is something low and perishable. Yet they are good, and may be lawfully formed as necessity requires, according to the doctrine of St. Austin and the other holy Fathers, provided, however, it be with humble submission to the divine will, and that whoever forms them may say with sincerity : Not my will but Thine be done, O God ; give, if it please Thee to do so, and if Thy gift will not be prejudicial to my salvation ; but refuse, if thou seest that giving it would contribute in the smallest degree to my loss ; for we should fear lest He say to us as to the sons of Zebedee : *You know not what you ask.*

II. The second are celestial and eternal, having heaven and our beatitude for their object : as when we do a good work to obtain pardon of our sins, to make satisfaction to the divine justice for sins committed, to acquire a virtue, to conquer a temptation, to enrich ourselves with eternal goods, to escape hell, to gain heaven. These intentions are much better than the former, because they tend to goods incomparably more excellent. We must take care, however, in doing an action to obtain some created good, even of grace or glory, not to place our happiness in the possession of this good ; for if a man served God and kept His laws *only* to avoid hell and gain heaven, that is, if, these motives aside, he had no fear of offending Him, it is certain he would do ill, and would fall into what he sought to escape, because he did not take God for his last end, but himself and his own interest, using God only as a means of obtaining what he desires, while God should be served in the first place for Himself, since He merits it by His infinite excellence, and in the next place for ourselves, because He is useful to us. When Jacob worked in the house of Laban to obtain Rachel, it cannot be doubted that he loved her firstly for her own sake, because she was amiable and beautiful, and secondly for his own sake, because he desired her for his spouse. The inten-

tion which bears upon our own interests thus understood is good; great Saints have used it: "I have inclined my heart to keep Thy justifications forever, *because of the reward*," says David; the infinite happiness prepared for the elect moves me powerfully to flee vice and practice virtue. Who can fail to be urged by this sentiment, since even kings do and suffer so much to attain an increase of territory, a small gain, a transient pleasure? St. Paul, excited by this motive, says that he ran with all his might to gain the crown. The same Saint says, speaking of Our Lord Himself, that the joy, the glorification of His Body, to be procured by the preaching of His Gospel and the salvation of men, caused Him to suffer willingly the death of the Cross, despising all its opprobrium and ignominy.

III. The third intentions are called divine; they stop not on earth like the first, not in heaven like the second, but purely in God, in His love, His honor, the accomplishment of His will; we then regard His interests as ours, and we make them the only object of our actions. These intentions immeasurably surpass the former in perfection and sublimity.

IV. They are, firstly, the most just; for since all creatures are made for the glory of their Creator, it is most reasonable that they should direct to this end whatever they do, employing themselves entirely in executing this noble design. Man comes forth from the Creator as from his first principle; he passes creatures by, using them only as means; he stops at the Creator as at his last end. Passion excites man against all reason to place his end in corruptible creatures. The pagans, though very ignorant of spiritual things, were accustomed in the beginning of their actions to pronounce twice the name of God, thus showing that they acknowledged Him as their beginning and their end: their beginning, by confessing that He was the cause of their being, and of all the power they had to

act ; their end, to whose glory they deemed it right to refer all their works.

V. Secondly, these intentions are evidently the most pleasing and glorious to God, since they refer only to Him, and they are also the most meritorious to man. The first are of brass, the second of silver, but the third are of the purest gold ; for the more purely man acts with God, the less he seeks his own interest in serving Him, and the more he acts thus, the greater is the recompense prepared for him: "I to my Beloved," says the Spouse ; I seek only His good pleasure in my thoughts, words, and works ; I neglect all else to do what is pleasing to Him; but, also, *His turning is towards me,* His Heart is attached to me, He watches over my interests with infinite care and tenderness. This is what Our Lord promised St. Catherine of Sienna when He said to her: Think of Me, and I will think of you; apply your soul to serve, praise, and glorify Me by yourself and by all creatures, and fear nothing; I charge Myself with your defence; I will render thee victorious over thy enemies, make thee advance in virtue, and save thee. A person whom I formerly knew, and to whom God gave several extraordinary graces, had a vision one day which was very instructive on this point, and which I will relate here, as being very proper to elucidate my subject. She saw Our Lord holding in His right hand a circle of gold; in the midst of this circle was a heart fastened on all sides with little golden chains ; several persons drew arrows from the circle to the heart ; some aimed them in such a manner that the arrows went only half way, and then fell to the ground ; others struck the circle, and the force of the blow made sparks issue from it ; but the third aimed straight at the heart, and pierced it through and through, and there came from it on them much blood and many rays of light. Struck with astonishment, this person demanded the signification of the mystery, and she

learned that the golden circle represented the mercy of God, which included, as the greatest effect it could produce, the amorous Heart of Jesus, with the infinite merits of His life and death ; that those who darted arrows represented three sorts of persons who make profession of piety : the first, whose arrows are without effect, represent those who do their actions without intention, and through routine ; the second, persons who propose good motives to themselves, but only for their own interest, hence they do not touch the Sacred Heart, but only the golden circle of the mercy of God, who, through His infinite goodness, gives them what they ask, represented by the sparks ; but the third are those who, soaring above all consideration of self-interest, act through the purest intentions of the love of God and for the glory of Jesus Christ, and hence they transpierce His Heart ; then flow on them with abundance the fruits of His passion and death, which are applied to them with great lights and holy aspirations. We may therefore conclude that the more purely we act for God, the more merits and riches we shall acquire for ourselves.

VI. In short, these intentions are the most perfect, because they proceed from the most excellent motive, being the result of the greatest love ; because as love necessarily excites the lover to will and do good to the beloved, and to will and do it in a manner proportioned to love, it is clear that whoever gives all he has and does all he can for the person he loves, gives the most unequivocal proof of love. Such are the excellences of these divine intentions ; we should therefore prefer them to all others, and strive to animate our actions by them.

Sire de Joinville relates that when St. Louis was at Acre in Palestine, a Religious of the Order of St. Dominic, who followed the court, met an old woman in the street, carrying in one hand a torch, and in the other a vase of water. The Dominican having asked her why she did this, received

the following reply: With this torch I would gladly burn heaven, and with this water I desire to quench the flames of hell, that being no longer able to serve God through fear of punishment or hope of reward, we might begin to love Him perfectly for His own sake. The King and his court were greatly touched and edified by this circumstance. Let us strive to serve God with this great purity; let us imitate here below the blessed in heaven, who praise, love, adore, and serve God incessantly with all their strength, not through hope of recompense or fear of chastisement, but solely for Himself; they know well that Paradise is theirs, that they cannot lose it, that they cannot attain to a higher place in it; they know that being confirmed in grace and glory, they are citizens of heaven for all eternity, and that it is impossible for them to incur the punishment of hell; but they render to God all these duties with the purest intention, through the knowledge they have of the sovereign merit of His infinite excellence; all attachment to self-interest is dead within them; they are entirely occupied with the desire of laboring for His glory. St. Thomas says: The beatified soul loves God in heaven, enjoys God, is united to Him, praises Him in an ineffable manner. She loves Him not only because He is good, liberal, and merciful towards her, but still more because he possesses these perfections in Himself, and because, by reason of these perfections, he deserves all the love of her heart. She enjoys Him in so disinterested a manner that she would rather lose this joy than put the smallest obstacle to the execution of His will, and she would regard it as the greatest happiness to accomplish this will perfectly at her own expense and to her own prejudice. She is united to God, and praises Him continually, not considering primarily what is useful to herself, but what contributes to His glory; and certainly it is very glorious to God to have eternally united to Him souls that so ardently

desire to glorify Him. In fine, the soul takes complacency in God with an affection so sincere and a love so inflamed that she rejoices more in His bliss than in her own ; her love goes still farther, she would rather be despoiled of all the happiness she enjoys in heaven and be eternally miserable than that He should lose one degree of happiness or perfection. [1]

We ought, after the example of those blessed souls, form, in all that regards the service of God, very pure intentions ; for this let us practise what we ask of Him daily in the Lord's prayer, *let Thy Name be hallowed* and honored ; teach us to love Thee, to bless Thee, to serve Thee on earth with motives as pure and as conducive to Thy glory as are those of the Saints *in Heaven.*

SECTION III.

EXPLANATION OF WHAT IS UNDERSTOOD BY DIVINE INTENTIONS— THE MOST PERFECT.

I. In what they consist.—II. The most perfect intentions.

I. To comprehend still better what has been said, and to place in a still clearer light what it imports every one to know, we, say that as we call that wine pure which is not mingled with any other liquor, so our intentions are pure and divine when they have no object in view but God, but in proportion as other intentions are mingled with them, they lose their power and strength as wine does when it is mingled with water.

Several motives may be considered as purity of intention, but chiefly three, to which all the others may be referred : the love of God, His glory, the accomplishment of His will ; all works springing from these intentions are

[1] Sec. 62.

pure, divine and pleasing to God. When about to do anything, let us raise our hearts to God and say : All for Thee, my sweet Lord, through love of Thee I do this action. Thou knowest that I desire only to please Thee. It is the *charity of Christ* that excites and *presses me* to do it, because I know it is pleasing to Him ; it is also in a spirit of glorification desiring to glorify Thee sovereignly by this action, and to render Thee as much honor and glory as all men have rendered Thee and shall render Thee eternally ; it is to accomplish Thy holy will which desires this of me.

Sometimes you may perform your action without proposing any other design than to give it to Our Lord that He may do with it as He pleases, and apply it to whatever may be most conducive to His own glory ; at other times you may offer your action to God that it may contribute in some manner to the salvation of His elect, in consideration of the love, praise and thanksgiving they will eternally render Him.

You may offer your action to hasten the deliverance of the soul in purgatory nearest to release, in order to send it to heaven in your place to love, bless, adore and serve God in the most perfect manner, since you are unable here below to compass this in the manner you desire. You may propose to yourself these or any other motives that divine love suggests ; for love raises a man to such great purity of intention that it excites him to give God all he has—his body, his soul. his actions, his merits and all that appertains to him without the most trivial reserve. He who burns with this love does not even think of his salvation, but only of loving and glorifying God in the most excellent manner in this life, by all the means we have discussed, and by a thousand others which love inspires ; he ardently desires heaven and fears hell, not because of his own interest, but solely for the interest of God ; because in heaven God is loved, praised and honored perfectly, and in hell He is

hated, blasphemed and cursed. It is related of Father Peter Faber that he feared to lose his soul more for love of God than through self-interest, because he did not wish that all the pains Jesus had taken to save it should be useless, nor that God should be deprived of the glory He desired to receive from it.

II. But the purest and most perfect intentions we can have are those which God proposes to Himself in acting in us. To comprehend this, we must remember that as philosophers and theologians teach. 1. That when we do any action whatever, God concurs with us according to the general rule that second causes cannot produce anything without the assistance of the first cause; the fire did not burn the three young Hebrews, and the sun stood still at the word of Josue, because God withdrew His concurrence. We are never alone in the production even of our smallest works; when we think, when we speak, when we read; now while I write this which you will read, God acts with us, otherwise it would be impossible for me to move my hand, or for you to open your eyes: all our acts require God's concurrence.

2. It must be observed that God concurs with us in two manners, one natural, the other supernatural: He concurs with us naturally when he acts as first and universal cause of nature, as when He acts in the sun, the elements, animals and all creatures, so far as regards actions purely natural; God concurs in a supernatural manner as the first and general cause of grace; He assists men to practise virtue by giving them the actual graces Jesus Christ merited for all by His labors, His life and death. Now since God concurs with us in two ways, since He does the same actions as we, it is certain that He has pure and perfect intentions, because His intentions must be worthy of Himself, and consequently of a purity, sanctity and perfection absolutely infinite. Well, these are the intentions we

should propose to ourselves as being the most perfect. If you inquire what they are in particular, I will tell you, that though we had no knowledge of them, it ought to be sufficient for us to know that they are the intentions of God, to assure us that they are elevated to the highest degree of perfection; but I will also tell you that, so far as it is given to us to discover them, He proposes to Himself three principal intentions in all He does, whether alone or with His creatures, viz.: His own glory, His love, and the perfect execution of His will.

So, then, when we do an action, we should accustom ourselves to propose the intentions God proposes in doing this action with us, and say: O, Lord, my God, I perform this action for the designs Thou formest. Thou doest it for Thy glory, Thy love, the accomplishment of Thy will; I do it for the same intentions, I direct it to the same end; grant me grace to do this as perfectly as I desire and as thou meritest. At other times, it will suffice to say: I propose to myself in this action the motives Thou proposest to Thyself; I adopt all Thy intentions, whether known to me or hidden from me; I desire never to have any others.

By acting thus, your actions cannot fail to become most noble and pleasing to God.

In this manner our Lord acted in His; for speaking of Himself, He says: My Father worketh until now; and I work: The Son cannot do anything of Himself but what He seeth the Father doing, for whatsoever He doth, the Son also doth in like manner.[1] Some theologians apply these words of Our Lord to His Divinity, some to His Humanity; and both are right, because as God, Our Lord has the same intentions as His Father in number and substance, as well as in essence; as man, He has the same intentions by resemblance. Hence, if the Father's end is

[1] John v. 17, 19.

His glory, love and the accomplishment of His will, Our Lord proposing to Himself the same end, often says: I seek not My own glory; but I honor My Father; I came not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me, that the world may know that I love My Father.

Behold the model Jesus Christ has left us for doing our actions well, and the grace He asked of His Father for His elect in the beautiful prayer He made before His death, in which, among other things, He says: Sanctify them in truth; that is, as St. Thomas explains, Make them Saints in Me, who am Thy Son and the Truth; render them participators in My sanctity and perfect imitators of My manner of performing My actions, and as Thou art in Me, and I in Thee, by acting for the same ends that they may be one in us by acting like us.

SECTION IV.

ANOTHER VERY GOOD INTENTION: WE SHOULD UNITE OUR ACTIONS WITH THOSE OF JESUS CHRIST.

I. In an actual manner.—II. Practice.

I. Another means very proper to render our actions perfect is, that which Our Lord often taught to St. Gertrude, and which He recommended very particularly to her, as is related in her life. It consists in uniting all our thoughts, words, actions and intentions to those of Jesus Christ. But to understand this well, it must be remembered that all good works are united habitually and virtually to Our Lord, even when this intention is not formed, because they are done in virtue of the grace He has merited for us of God, His Father, by the actions of His life and the sorrows of His death. We speak not of habitual union, but of actual union made by the desire the soul has of uniting

her works to those of Jesus Christ ; by her act of faith in the infinite power which all the actions of Jesus Christ, even the smallest, have to ennoble and perfect ours, by the high esteem she conceives of their excellence, by her great love of Our Lord which impels her to desire this union, by the petition she makes to the Father to perfect it, and by the hope she entertains of obtaining this favor. As by these and other similar acts, the merits of Jesus Christ are specially applied to the soul, which is thus bedewed with His blood, she unites her action to His in a particular manner, and it is by this union that the actions of man acquire the wonderful splendor which elevates them in the sight of God. It is true that the good works of the just are excellent and precious because of the general union they have with those of the Son of God, but it is also certain that actual union gives them a still greater lustre : if you plunge your pen into gold ink, you will find it covered with gold when you draw it out ; cloth plunged into good purple dye becomes a most beautiful purple ; in like manner, by plunging our actions into the pure gold and fine purple of those of our Saviour, they will become most brilliant and precious. This actual union is as the last touches of varnish with which painters embellish their pictures, and which give brilliancy and vivacity to colors that were before sombre and languishing. Our Lord once appeared to St. Gertrude, accompanied by St. John Evangelist, who commenced to write in her presence, now dipping his *stylus* in a horn he carried in his hand, and forming black letters ; again he dipped his pen in Our Lord's side, and then he wrote in red letters : Our Lord revealed to the Saint that the black letters represented the ordinary actions of the soul, and the red those done in union with His death ; and he added : Unite to My sufferings all you do in the monastery, your fasts, your vigils and all your other exercises. When you mortify your eyes,

ears and other senses, offer all to me in union with the love whereby I restrained My senses during My Passion.

II. Since this practice contains so excellent a means of perfection, let us speedily make use of it; let us unite our thoughts to the thoughts of Our Lord, our words to His words, our intentions to His, in order to ennoble, purify and perfect them in His, like a drop of cold, muddy water cast into a great tun of wine, which immediately changes color and takes all the qualities of wine. In the old law God commanded that an altar should be raised on the earth, on which to offer Him sacrifice: by this altar the Holy Fathers understand Our Lord, on whom God wishes us to place our offerings when we present them to Him. This is the altar which St. John saw in the heavens, as he himself relates: Then there came an Angel, who stood before the altar having a golden thurible, and there was given him much incense, that he might offer the prayers of all the Saints on the golden altar which is before the throne of God.[1] The golden altar and the altar on earth both represent Our Lord, because in Him are united the earth of our humanity and the gold of His Divinity; the golden thurible also represents Our Lord, according to the sentiment of the Doctors; hence the Priest at the commencement and during the course of the Mass often kisses the altar and the censer, to denote the faith, respect, love and confidence of the Church towards our Lord, whom she acknowledges for her only altar, on which she immolates her victims to God, as her golden censer in which she offers Him her prayers that thus she may become to Him as a sweet perfume; and this God Himself promised to Isaiah, saying: *Their victims shall please Me being offered on My altar.*[2] Then shalt thou accept sacrifices of justice, oblations and whole burnt *offerings*;[3] the holocausts of faithful hearts, their prayers, fasts and all their good

[1] Apoc. [2] Isaiah. [3] Ps. 90.

works ; then shall they immolate victims on Thy *altar*, and these offerings shall be agreeable to Thee.

Moses relates that Jacob, being clothed with the perfumed garments of his elder brother as his mother counseled, approached his father Isaac, who was nearly blind, and kissed him ; the good old man, replenished with extraordinary joy, blessed him, saying : Behold the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field which the Lord hath blessed. God give thee the dew of heaven and the fat of earth, corn and wine in abundance. Be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down before thee.[1] When, according to the salutary counsel of our mother, the Church, we clothe ourselves with the merits of Our Lord, who is our eldest brother by the actual union of our works to His, God the Father, smelling the sweet perfume of the virtues of his Son, of His perfect obedience, His zeal for the divine glory, His infinite charity towards men, His unalterable patience in affliction, His meekness in opprobrium, etc., closes His eyes to our imperfections and says with infinite joy of heart : I smell My Son's odor, the odor He spread abroad in life and death for My glory and the salvation of men ; then He blesses us and showers the graces of heaven upon us, and, as far as is necessary, those of earth ; thus we are elevated above other men, we become richer and more powerful than those of our brethren who are not clothed with these mysterious garments. St. Gertrude, in offering a painful action to Our Lord, said to Him : My God, I offer Thee this action by Thy only Son, to Thy eternal praise ; and she afterwards comprehended that what is offered to God for this intention is elevated above all that men can conceive, and is ineffably pleasing to His Divine Majesty ; whatever we see through a green-glass appears green, through a red glass appears

[1] Gen.

red ; in like manner, all that is presented to God through His Son is most agreeable to Him.

In practice, we may sometimes choose some of these intentions and sometimes others ; generally it will suffice to take that which strikes the mind most at the time, or to include all the particular intentions in a general intention; as, for example, I do this action for all the good intentions I am accustomed to propose to myself, and for those which God desires I should form. Moreover, we ought to observe three things in this exercise : 1, to perform all that we do, for the intentions of which we have spoken, and chiefly those God proposes to Himself in acting with us ; 2, to remember that in every action, whatever intention we propose, whatever care we take, we have always reason to fear, so great is our weakness and our corruption, that our actions and intentions are accompanied with many defects ; to remedy this we must unite them to those of Our Lord to purify them, and give them greater perfection ; 3, to remedy still more whatever is defective in the union we make of our actions and intentions with those of Our Lord, we should offer to God the Father the action of His Son, which corresponds to ours ; further, all the actions of His life as something which belongs to us by the donation the Father Himself has made us, as we see by these words : "God so loved the world as to give us His only Son ;" and by consequence, all the actions and merits of this only Son ; for, as St. Paul says, in giving Him to us He has given us all things with him. Whoever gives the tree gives the fruit.

But what is more important is, to be very exact in directing the intentions well ; this must be done; 1. In the morning by offering to God in general all the actions of the day, and in particular, at least the principal, such as Mass, meditation, study, work, meals, recreation, etc. 2. We should renew this intention during the day, at the begin-

ning of important actions of long duration. 3. If possible, we should every hour recollect ourselves, considering rapidly what passed during the preceding hour, as St. Ignatius used to do, to thank God for the graces bestowed during that time, ask pardon for the defects committed, and renew the intentions of the morning for the actions of the following hour.

SECTION V.

CONCLUSION OF THE TWO PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

I. We should do our actions well.—II. All can do it.—III. We should imitate three models; God.—IV. Our Lord.—V. The Holy Virgin.

I. Since this doctrine is so important, we must not fail to put it in practice by performing our actions and directing our intentions well. The good you do, *do it well;*[1] says Moses; *Be excellent in all your works,*[2] says the Sage; be not content with doing them in an ordinary manner, but do them in a high and perfect manner. And we may remark that these words were spoken to the Jews, who were gross and carnal, who lived under the law of fear, wherein was only a shadow of the good things to come, as St. Paul observes. Origen remarks that Moses had a leprous hand, which he hid in his bosom, as if to show its unfitness to perform a perfect work.

If in returning from conversing with God on Mount Sinai, his countenance was resplendent, its light was composed of only two rays, like the horns of the moon, and yet he was obliged to wear a veil when he spoke with the children of Israel; while Our Lord appeared to the disciples on Mount Thabor, resplendent as the sun; and as the moon is the symbol of imperfection, and the sun of

[1] Exod. vi. 18. [2] Eccl. xxxiii. 23.

perfection, this was to show that the Gospel elevated men to knowledge far more perfect, and actions more noble, than did the Old Law. If, in spite of all this, the Jews, groaning under the law, were obliged to perform their actions in an excellent manner, with how much more reason are Christians, and especially Religious, obliged to do so, who are enlightened with so much light, fortified with so many helps and by the Sacraments, aided by so many means, carrying only the sweet yoke of the law of grace and love!

II. Every one can and ought to do this, since Our Lord by saying: "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect," invites all to perfection, every age, sex and disposition, and Our Lord asks nothing impossible. Now, our perfection consists in doing, with purity of intention and all other requisite circumstances, our ordinary actions, even the smallest. There is no one who cannot do this if he pleases, and therefore no one who cannot become perfect. St. John saw a beautiful city which had twelve gates that opened to all parts of the world, to show that heaven may be reached from every side; in like manner, on earth, perfection may be attained in all places and stations: men and women, ecclesiastics and laics, religious and secular, masters and servants, virgins and married people, the learned and the ignorant—all can become perfect; no one is excluded but by his own fault. Thus we see in all times, nations and conditions, persons of both sexes of most eminent virtue and high sanctity, whom the Church specially honors and reveres; because it is not nobility, nor science, nor any other natural or accidental qualities that can make a man holy, but good will, attention to do his actions well, purity of intention and efficacious co-operation with grace.

III. This being so, we should strive to perform our actions with very great perfection, and for this purpose imitate the three most perfect models in the universe. First,

God, who unfailingly observes three things in his works: 1. He does them with sovereign perfection; 2. He does all in this manner, even the smallest; 3. He does them for motives infinitely noble and elevated. God performs all his works with the greatest perfection, says St. Thomas;[1] He has made the heavens, the earth, angels, men and all creatures in so perfect a manner that nothing higher can be conceived. It is the same in what regards our redemption, whether He chastises the sinner, or patiently awaits his repentance; whether he withdraws His sensible graces from His elect, or accords them; whether He is familiar with the faithful soul or seems to regard her as a stranger; and to go into details, with St. Thomas, whether it rains, storms or is calm, whether it is hot, cold or temperate, whether the crops are abundant or scant—all these things could not fall out better as regards the designs of God. He begins, continues and perfects all through motives the noblest and holiest, to manifest the excess of His goodness, and for the advantage of angels and men.

IV. The second model is the Son of God Our Lord, whose actions were done with a perfection so eminent and extraordinary that the least glance of His eye, the smallest movement of His sacred hands, and feet, the least word of His divine mouth was sufficient to purify and redeem this world, and an infinity of worlds more wicked than this; because the value of each of His actions was absolutely infinite, on account of the infinite excellence of His Divine Person; hence it was said of Him with reason: *He did all things well.*

V. The third model is the Holy Virgin, Mother of God, who performed all her actions with such perfection that she merited more by the least of her works than the greatest Saint merited in a whole life. Therefore does the Spouse say of her in the Canticles: Thou art my Beloved, a paradise of pomegranates with fruits of the orchard; cypress

[1] Opusc. 62.

with spikenard, saffron, sweet cane and cinnamon, with all the chief perfumes; thus showing that all her thoughts, words and works were so perfect that, like exquisite perfumes, they embalmed heaven and earth, and that like pomegranates, all of which are crowned, even the smallest, they each bore the diadem of consummate perfection. Let us strive to follow these models as nearly as possible; let us study, like Mary, to adorn and crown all our actions with great perfection; that our good angels, and still more our good God, may be able to say of each of us what was said of Christ Jesus, our true model: *He hath done all things well.* Let us imitate God Himself, doing our actions as St. Thomas admonishes, "by the grace our Lord gives us, and according to the full extent of this grace with all the desires of the Church Triumphant and the Church Militant, in the name of the Creator; let us do each action with as much ardor and affection as if the whole work of our salvation, all the glory of God and all the happiness of the universe depended on it, and we had no other action to do. What the holy Doctor here says, he practiced, as may be seen in his life, and it is by this means that he elevated himself to the high sanctity he attained. Let us perform our works with proper reflection, not seeking to do too many, to do them hurriedly, to attract attention by them, but to do them well: Like Zeuxis, who according to Aristotle, sought not to represent things as they were, but as they should be; and Sophocles, who in his tragedies makes his personages speak not in the ordinary manner, but with perfect propriety: for it is true that one thing which is perfect in its kind is worth more than a hundred defective things of the same nature. Further, let us not neglect an action because it appears trifling, for there are no actions such; all are great, since a single one can purchase Paradise. What contributes more to the magnificence of Kings than the regal mantle, which is made from a little silk worm? Honey, than which

nothing is sweeter, is the work of a bee. The smallest actions done well enrich us more than the greatest actions performed in an ordinary manner or with negligence.

But above all, let us always have good and holy intentions which tend to God and to eternal happiness; after the example of the Spouse, let us ascend as a pillar of smoke, exhaling myrrh, incense and all perfumes. This column of smoke, formed by the Jews of perfumes they brought from Alexandria to burn before the divine Majesty, shows us that our intentions ought to be elevated directly to God. When the just Abel and the wicked Cain offered sacrifices to Him, that of Abel was pleasing to Him because of his upright intention, while that of Cain was rejected because of his perverse intention. Hebrew Doctors say, that to show the differences between these sacrifices, God permitted that a thick vapor should fall towards the earth from Cain's, while there ascended from Abel's a luminous smoke, which rose like a pillar towards heaven, to show that the intention of the one was pure and upright; that he proposed to himself only the glory of God, while that of the other inclined only to earthly things.

Let us follow the example of Abel; it is what every man who desires to be happy should do. He applies his heart to perfect his works, says the Sage, and his watching is to polish them to perfection. So doth the potter sitting at his work, turning the wheel about with his feet, who is always carefully set to his work, and maketh all his work by number. Let us act thus: clay in the hands of God, its Creator, is raised to so high a degree of excellence that when animated it becomes the noblest creature in the universe: let our actions even the smallest thus become perfect and precious.

CHAPTER XIX.

OF THE OBSERVANCE OF RULE.

I. We must keep the rules for the love of God.—II. For our own perfection.—III. In order not to give bad example.

I. The Religious, to whom this chapter is chiefly addressed, ought to strive to observe his rules through the same motive of love which inclines a loving soul to procure glory and pleasure for the object of his love. Many reasons oblige him to this, but the principal, and that which ought to make most impression on him is ardent love of God, whom he greatly honors and pleases by observing faithfully the rule he has embraced. Those who love the Lord, says the Holy Ghost, show it by fully executing His *law;*[1] and elsewhere: *The care of discipline is love of wisdom: and love is the keeping of the laws.*[2] In this, love manifests itself. We ought to apply courageously to the exact observance of our constitutions, says our Father St. Ignatius, and omit nothing to fulfill them perfectly, not through a spirit of fear but through love, fixing our eyes on Jesus Christ whom we wish to serve and please. Having said elsewhere that our rules do not oblige under pain of sin, mortal or venial, he thus gives the reason: The love of God must succeed in place of the fear of offending Him, and the desire of our greater protection and the greater glory of God will move us to act. He says also in the beginning of our rules and constitutions, that the interior law of charity the Holy Ghost has written on our hearts, ought to make us observe them very exactly. If you love Me, says Jesus Christ, keep my commandments; and in effect, by keeping our rules cheerfully and not by force, we

[1] Eccl. ii. 19 apud Vatabl. [2] Wisd. vi. 19.

shall glorify and praise Our Lord Jesus in a very perfect manner. The less the obligation the more affection we show in observing them ; we also manifest a great desire of pleasing God when we obey Him in things He does not exact of us under pain of sin. The true lover knows no distinction between the request and the command of the person he loves. It suffices to a good son to know the will of his father, he will execute it without waiting for a command ; for his ardent desire is to please his father and his greatest fear is to displease him. The Religious who carefully observes his rules, whether they bind under pain of sin or not, greatly honors God, since he submits to them by the free determination of his will, and since it is certainly most glorious to Our Lord to have men who consecrate themselves willingly to His service, and give themselves to Him with such generosity.

II. The second reason which should induce a Religious to observe the rules punctually is his own interest, since his perfection consists in it. A man is truly a man when he keeps the laws of nature ; he is truly a Christian if he keeps the commandments of God and His Church, but he can be a true Religious only by observing his rules. Hence Religious are commonly called Regulars, and this title several papal bulls give to the members of our Society. The rules are means given by God to each Religious to attain the end of the Order he has embraced ; he cannot otherwise attain it ; he cannot fulfil its duties well ; he cannot co-operate with God to procure Him the glory He has a right to expect ; he can neither be useful to himself nor to others, because it is impossible to attain an end without making use of the proper means. One can reach a city only by the roads that lead to it. Now the means God gives to each Religious to attain the end of his institute, are certainly the rules God prescribes him by the founder of his institute ; these means are called *rules* be-

cause they regulate the actions of Religious and direct them to this end—as the rule of an architect adjusts the stones of the building, so the action, conversation, or visit that is not conformed to the rule is necessarily not right, and consequently incapable of leading to the end. The rules have been called the mirror of Religious. St. Austin thus designates his rules, because, says Hugh of St. Victor, by regarding ourselves in them we can see how we are made ; whether we are handsome or ugly, good or bad ; whether we advance or recede, whether we are pleasing or displeasing to God. Each Religious should then engrave profoundly on his heart this principle, that his perfection consists in the exact observance of his rules ; that the more faithfully he keeps them the sooner he will become perfect, and acquire the true spirit of his Order. On the contrary, whatever devotions he practices, however good his works may be in appearance, if his life be not conformed to his rules, his pious exercises will become a hindrance instead of being a means of perfection. His actions, whether for God or his neighbor, will not be agreeable to God though they may to himself ; because if they are good, even though they might be means of perfection for others, they are not so for him. God does not will him to attain perfection by these ways, nor does He require this kind of service from him ; He only asks him to keep his rule, by which the Divine will is declared. I say of these exercies and actions what St. Austin said of the virtuous and heroic actions of the pagans : they are great steps, but they are all made outside the road, and when outside the right path these strides of a giant will not gain the end so readily as will the crawling of an infant who is on the right track. Devotions against the rule must be ill-regulated, however delicately self-deceit may color them. Moreover, as the exact observance of rule includes many acts of obedience, humility, etc., and great testimonies of love towards God,

the Religious who is faithful obtains of the divine Majesty very many gifts and graces which cause him to lead a holy life and conduct him to perfection, while infraction of rule deprives the Religious of these graces, and leads him little by little to the misfortunes we have mentioned, when detailing the effects of venial sins. Our Lord said one day to St. Bridget, that there were three classes of persons who might be compared to three vessels voyaging on the sea, the first of which had neither mast, helm or sails, and consequently was tossed to and fro, left to the mercy of the waves, and would certainly be wrecked. The second vessel had sails, masts, helm, but most of its cordage was injured and sails torn, and thus it was in great danger of being lost. The third was in good order, it had all that was essential, it made the voyage pleasantly, braving waves and winds, and arrived gaily at port. The first vessel represents a Religious who lives in mortal sin, and takes no care of his salvation ; the second, one who frequently commits venial sin and transgresses his rules ; the third, one who keeps his rules faithfully.

III. The third motive to excite a Religious to an exact observance of his rules, is the good example brethren are bound to give each other ; for good example draws many to virtue while bad example is extremely pernicious. *Do good, not only before God but before men,*[1] says St. Paul to the Romans, and he repeats the same to the Corinthians ;[2] he himself learned this from the Wise Man who says : *Provide good before God and man.*[3] This is greatly recommended to all who live in community, "who," says St. Bernard, "ought to live in it with great order and circumspection, and watch carefully over themselves, both for sake of God and for sake of their brethren, avoiding sin, which is displeasing to God, and scandal, which is injurious to their brothers." Now it is certain that the obliga-

[1] Rom. xii. 17. [2] II. Cor. viii. 21. [3] Prov. iii. 4.

tion of good example consists in the observance of rules, for when a Religious loves and keep them faithfully, his light shines before men and the whole house is embalmed with the odor of his virtues, to the great profit and edification of his brethren. On the contrary, the transgression of the rules strikes the eyes, disturbs domestic order and does great damage ; because, as bad example is contagious and easily communicates its venom, he who gives it takes away the fear and opens the way for others to do the same. A stone which falls from an arch injures not only itself but the others, because when it falls the others lose their bond, and fall after it. Hence St. Paul writes to the faithful of Thessalonica : We beseech you brethren in the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ to withdraw yourselves from those who walk disorderly, and not according to the rules they have received of us. He had already said to them : *Reprehend the unquiet and the undisciplined ;*[1] he uses in these texts a word which signifies a bad soldier, a man who does not remain at his post, and who neglects to observe military discipline, who may therefore cause great misfortune to the whole body. Such men are very prejudicial to a religious order, it is through them that it loses its beauty and lustre, that it grows weak and falls into ruin ; for as an order can sustain itself only by exact and constant observance of rule it can destroy itself only by contemning and transgressing them. There needs but one trangressor in a house that gives itself this license, and God will no longer regard it as favorably as before. He will withdraw from it His spiritual and even temporal blessings, will not shower as copiously as before His graces on those who dwell in it, and may permit that they be afflicted, persecuted and the butt of many miseries. Cruel vipers, unnatural children, they tear the bosom of their mother, they murder her who carried them in her womb, who reared

[1] II. Thess. iii. 6.

them with so much charity and solicitude, who fed them at her breast, nourished them with her food, covered them with her garments, received them into her house, and provided for all their wants. *Cursed of God is he who outrages and exasperates his mother !*[1]

SECTION I.

ANSWER TO OBJECTIONS.

I. First objection. The rules do not bind under pain of sin.—II. Second objection. Some points are of little importance.—III. Third objection. They are good for novices.—IV. The *ancients are more bound to their observance than the juniors*.

I. *First objection.* Since the rules oblige not under pain of sin, their infraction is not of such great importance. This is bad logic, it is to draw a wrong conclusion from an excellent principle, for what our holy founder gives as a spur to excite our love and make us tend to highest perfection ought not to serve as a stumbling-block, and foster our sloth. Those who serve God only through fear of the pains which follow sin, are not far enough advanced to understand the language of love ; *the perfect charity* which, as St. John says, *casts out* servile *fear ;* the only fear of the perfect lover is to displease the object of his love. St. Miletus, patriarch of Alexandria, visiting the Religious of his diocese found among others the celebrated St. Simeon Stylites, who was fastened to his pillar by a heavy iron chain which held his right foot ; the patriarch immediately commanded him to loosen it saying : He who loves God ought to be held by no chains but those of love and reason. Besides all this, though the rules oblige not under pain of sin, it is yet very difficult, and sometimes impossible, to transgress them without sin ; either by contempt, says St.

[1] Eccles. iii. 18.

Thomas, because one does not wish to submit to what is enjoined, or by negligence and the little desire one has to advance in perfection, to which all Religious are bound to aspire, or by some vicious affection; not to speak of the bad example commonly given by those who violate the rules. Father Francis Suarez, who was so illustrious for science and virtue, says that though the rules, except in the matter of the vows, bind not under pain of sin, and though, speculatively speaking, they can be infringed without committing venial sin, it is nevertheless very difficult in practice to violate them without venial sin; because if the violation be an omission, it comes from tepidity, which dislikes the difficulty accompanying regular observance; if it be a fault of commission, it proceeds from some unruly passion or the sallies of an immortified heart.

II. *Second Objection.* As to the vows and more important rules we must be careful not to transgress them, but we need not take so much care about the less important observances; it is not in these that our perfection consists. This is one of the most dangerous errors that could glide into a religious house. We may neglect things because they are small; we are not obliged to practice these little observances; we can become perfect by the practise of solid virtue without paying so much attention to trifles; those who are solicitous about such things become scrupulous. From these false maxims, as from a bad tree, only pernicious fruit can come; fervor cools little by little, interior and exterior mortification are insensibly lost, recollection is diminished, the mind is dissipated and spread abroad among creatures; liberty is given to the senses, we become remiss in everything; and besides, in religion there is no rule of so little importance as to be contemned; all are great and important, being for us means of perfection.

Let us judge of them by what may be regarded as the

least important, as to enter the cell of another without permission, not to quit an occupation at the sound of the bell, etc. Well, I say these rules are important: 1, because they come from God who has inspired them, and nothing can proceed from His infinite Majesty but what is important; 2, because of the legislator, to whom they cost so many prayers, tears and deep meditations; 3, because they are proper and excellent means to arrive at the end of an institute. Moreover, can we regard as of little importance rules which can procure us, during this life, repose of conscience, treasures of merits and graces; and in the next, eternal glory?—while the soul that transgresses them loses interior peace, sullies the conscience with venial sin, and even exposes herself to the frightful torments of purgatory. Can we regard as of small importance faults against the perfection of love? Whoever truly loves abhors all that could displease the object of his love, and never says: It is but a trival fault; for the lover would rather die than inflict the smallest wound upon his beloved.

Farther, these rules are important because of the dangerous consequences of their infraction. Transgressions of rule, disturb and trouble a house, and overthrow religious discipline; for contempt of one rule, which we regard as trifling, leads to contempt of more important rules, and by degrees disposes the mind to be unfaithful to all. The smallest things conduct to the greatest. It was Absalom's hair that caused him to fall into the hands of Joab. St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote as follows, and he spoke from experience, having been first a Religious, and then Abbot of Bec: "It is very certain that fervor will be sustained, peace and order preserved in a monastery where the smallest things are observed; but when these are neglected, discipline relaxes by little, order is destroyed, all falls into ruin;" and he used to illustrate this truth by the comparison of a fish-pond whose waters soon run out,

and leave the fishes to die, if care be not taken to close the least openings ; it is the same with religious orders, if great care be not taken to observe even the least important rules, the transgression of them will form, as it were, little openings by which fervor and the spirit of piety will go out. In the early days of our Society there arose a contest in the College of Naples between Father Nicolas Bobadilla, the Provincial, and Father Antony Aviedo, the Rector, because the former judged it unsuitable to attach the sanctity of our Society to rules of little importance ; maintaining that the sanctity of the Order should be established, not on little practices, but on great and solid virtues ; as if, as the historian judiciously observes, solid virtues regarded as being of little import anything pleasing to God, and could acquire perfect beauty without all those ornaments. This is an error but too common among men ; they fly labor and weigh not the value of things ; hence they make small account of trifling things, though often things apparently trifling turn out to be of more importance than a superficial observer would suppose. The event proved to Father Bobadilla that he was deceived ; for the liberty he gave of transgressing the less important rules caused discipline to relax to such a degree that some grew careless of every rule, great or small, and left the Society. St. Ignatius, hearing this, forbid Father Bobadilla to trouble Father Aviedo, and commanded the latter to enforce the observance of the smallest rules as a thing of much importance, remissness in which is but too often the cause of the ruin of religious houses. The epidermis, which covers all parts of our bodies, and on which nature has spread all her beauties, without which man would be hideous and extremely sensible to all atmospheric changes, is only a thin skin, insensible, and of so little value that the soul does not deign to touch it, to give it life. It is the same with little observances in a religious order ; they pre-

serve it, they prevent the transgression of important rules; fidelity to *them* forms the beauty of Religious; without it they appear hideous and deformed in the eyes of the clear-sighted. If the Religious, says St. Isidore, who is not exact in little things, would only open his eyes, which negligence and sloth have closed, he would see things far different from what they now appear to him; he would fear as a dreadful calamity what heretofore seemed to him a very trivial matter.

As regards rules apparently of small importance, I add that if they are little things they are more easily observed, and that the violation of them can proceed only from great tepidity and an evident want of ardent love for Our Lord. The thing is easy, therefore we need not do it: what a consequence to draw! It is quite otherwise; if it caused us to sweat blood and water, we should have more excuse for neglecting it. If you loved any one, and were unwilling to give him from the abundance of your riches a cent which he asked of you, what would be said? Would you be excused for refusing him because what he asked was the merest trifle? Certainly not; on the contrary, this should make you the more prompt to oblige him; and if you failed to do so you would clearly show that your love is deceitful and vanishes like smoke.

III. *Third objection.* If the exact observance of the rules is so necessary, certainly it ought not to be novices and young Religious, who should show most zeal for their observance, but the ancients who are most elevated in rank, whether for their learning or their employments. And yet some persons seem to imagine that these ought to be allowed greater liberty than others. I have always regarded it as a very reasonable thing to solace the aged, whom years and labors have partially exhausted, but I see no reason which ought to dispense them from the observance of the rules and the practice of solid virtue; on the contrary, I

believe they are more obliged to this than others, for as they advance in age they ought to become more humble, more obedient, more patient, more charitable, more detached from creatures and from self. Because, by all sorts of reasons, the longer one is in religion, the more he ought to grow in virtue and sanctity, since for this he entered religion, and for this God gives him so many graces and means of advancing. Prayers, meditations, communions, and his other exercises ought to engrave profoundly on his mind the love of virtue, otherwise what advantage does he reap from them? Is not the time he devotes to them lost? The more we study the more learned we become; the longer we are in religion the greater should be our virtue. And, verily, is it not a lamentable thing to see a Religious full of days and empty of virtues, who has grown grey in pious exercises without becoming pious, who, instead of increasing in fervor as he increases in age, becomes less exact and more remiss. *Are you then so foolish*,[1] and so unfortunate, asks St. Paul, as to fall behind instead of pressing forward, to finish so badly after beginning so well, to end with tepidity a career begun with courage.

St. Maximin, martyr, relates of the Lampetian heretics, that after having lived three years in religion in great regularity, they then became so licentious as to abandon themselves without shame to all sorts of crimes. It is said of Hermogenes, who was so famous for erudition at the age of fifteen that the Emperor Antoninus, desirous of hearing him, sent for him, and was so delighted with him that he made him magnificent presents; but in time he lost his learning to such a degree as caused the sophist Antiochus to say of him: "Hermogenes was an old man in his youth, and has become a child in his old age." These words may be applied to some Religious who, after having passed

[1] Gal. iii. 3.

their first years in fervor and observance of rule, belie themselves in old age, and dishonor their gray hairs with the levity and follies of youth. Man, in coming into the world, presents first the most perfect and spiritual part, that is, his head; the other parts are used only for the animal operations. In like manner, it often happens that the first part of a Religious life is the best; it is that in which he lives according to the spirit, but he afterwards degenerates, becoming more material and sensual. Alas! he should do just the contrary: "My brethren," says St. Eucherius, "consider your vocation, meditate with care what your state demands of you." The religious profession is without doubt a powerful means of perfection, but not to strive to live perfectly in it is to precipitate one's self into damnation. What use is it to live in a place of silence and repose, if you be a prey to passions and vices? What imports it that your exterior is calm if your interior be agitated by tempest? We are accustomed to count our years in religion, but in this we deceive ourselves; we have properly lived therein only as many days as we have spent in the renunciation of our own will, the mortification of our passions, and the observance of our rules. Alexander says, in one of his historians: "I count not my years, but my victories." The Religious, who ought to have more ambition to conquer heaven than this prince had to conquer earth, should not count the weeks and months he has passed in religion, but the victories he has gained over his enemies, over his vices and passions, otherwise to what serves his other calculations? They prove him to be more culpable, they show his tepidity in clearer light, and if his life be counted by many years and few virtues, he has little reason to boast of his gray hairs.

IV. I say more; the ancients and those who are elevated above others are bound to keep the rules more exactly than others, because their example is potent for good or

evil. Light gives splendor to all it touches, but it gives splendor in a high degree to objects brilliant in themselves : thus gold burnished by the rays of the sun shines with exceeding splendor ; so good example is always powerful even when it comes from novices and young Religious, but its power is far greater when it proceeds from those who in age, learning and office are elevated above others. It would be difficult to paint the good effects they produce in a house when they acquit themselves worthy of their duties, show themselves zealous for observance, subject themselves to the smallest points of discipline : then they maintain all in order ; they become torches which illumine it, pillars that sustain it ; they dispose and even constrain others to do right. But if they dispense with the rules, neglect the common exercises, how will it be with the others, since those who ought to guide them wander themselves, and instead of spurring them on to do their actions well, become for them an occasion of ruin? The Religious who observes well only the principal things, is like a man who is clothed with a rich and gorgeous robe, the borders of which are torn and smeared with mud ; whence the garment loses its splendor, and is not even decent ; and yet the borders of a robe are not as important and necessary as the part that covers the shoulders, the breast and the heart ; still it is on the borders that the most beautiful ornaments are put. The High Priest in the Old Law wore a robe the edges of which were sumptuously embroidered with pomegranates and little bells : fidelity to fulfil the least points of the rule forms, as it were, a crown of pomegranates, because it shows fruits of perfection and enriches the observer with a crown of grace and glory. These little points of the rule, well observed, are as bells which make a loud sound and are heard afar off, and the better they are observed and the

higher the rank of him who observes them, the more sound they make. I know that accidents may sometimes prevent one from observing them ; that pressing business, which engrosses all one's thoughts for the time, must be attended to, and that consequently one cannot always observe the rules of the house as regards time, place and manner. It is certain that even the most exact cannot always and under all circumstances do this, but it is not less certain that non-observance of the rules usually proceeds not so much from pressing affairs as from want of love of regularity, since many who have very urgent business to transact contrive not to neglect the common duties of the community. Foresight, order and good-will enable many to keep rules which others easily excuse themselves from observing.

SECTION II.

CONCLUSION.

I. We must observe the rules.—II. Even the smallest.— III. We must strive to induce others to observe them.—IV. Against dispensations.

I. After what has been said, we must make a firm and most sincere resolution to love ardently and keep perfectly all our rules ; if we keep them, they will keep us. "Hear, my son, the commandments of thy father," says the Sage, "and observe the law of thy mother ; these commandments will be a crown for thy head and an ornament for thy neck,[1]" a mark of ingenuity and nobility. "My son, keep the principles of thy father and abandon not the teachings of thy mother. Carry them in thy heart incessantly, that thou mayest think of them day and night ; have them fastened on thy neck, that being continually before thy eyes thou mayest never forget them. When thou walkest,

[1] Prov. i. 8.

let them go with thee ; when thou sleepest, let them keep thee ; and when thou awakest, talk with them. Because the commandment is a lamp and the law a light.[2]" We can apply to Religious what St. Paul said, speaking of the precepts he had given the Galatians : "And whosoever shall follow this rule, accomplish the duties of the Order he has embraced, peace on them and *mercy*, both in this life and the next." At the death of St. Benedict two of his Religious saw a path, radiant with light, extending from the Saints' cell to heaven. A venerable old man appeared to them and asked them whether they knew for whom this path had been made? They replied in the negative, whereupon he said : "It is the way by which Benedict, the beloved of God, ascended to heaven." The rule is the road by which each Religious must reach beatitude ; it is the way which God Himself has traced, and by which He wills all Religious to attain eternal happiness.

And, in fact, is it not deplorable to be in the Religious state and yet not be all that the Religious profession requires?—to have quitted country, parents, friends, wealth, honors and pleasures, which might be enjoyed with a good conscience, since they are gifts of God ; to have broken nature's dearest ties to enter religion and, after all, to lead a tepid, languishing life—to have the body in the monastery and the heart elsewhere, to wear the habit of religion and not observe its practices? St. Cesarius says on this subject : "We had courage for the love of God to mortify our dearest and most natural affections, to flee from the tender look of our dear parents, as if we hated them, to declare war against filial piety, and now we are negligent in overcoming some little defects, in retrenching some slight immortifications, in avoiding trivial imperfections." We seek to steal little pleasures after having despised great ones, which we might lawfully enjoy ; after having aban-

[2] Prov. vi. 20.

doned riches that we could keep without sin, we attach ourselves to trifles. What blindness! what misery! If a man should leave his home, his wife, his friends, his children, and traverse the ocean amid a thousand pains and dangers to pick up a pin in India, we would say that he had entirely lost his senses to go so far for so worthless a thing, which he could find of better quality at home. Certainly the religious vocation is an excellent thing, but the main point is, to live according to its spirit and to observe exactly its rules; for to dwell in a state so elevated and have the mind occupied with abject things, to have a celestial vocation and terrestrial thoughts and affections—to be in a religious house, like a man standing at his door, the body in the house and the eyes in the street to see what is going on and amuse himself with the passers-by—to be in religion exteriorly and in the world interiorly, to mingle in secular business—is to resign one's self to become the laughing-stock of men, and the certain object of the Divine vengeance. It would be much better to remain in the world. St. Basil said to a rich senator who had become a Religious, but lived tepidly in religion: "You have lost the quality of a senator, but you have not gained that of a monk; you are no longer a secular, but neither are you a Religious, for you do not perform the works of one." The same may be said of others: their habit, their duties, their vows, separate them from the world, but their manners show that they are not true children of religion; they profess a state which they despise; they entered religion with ardor, they live in it with sloth and tepidity; they have subjected themselves to rules which they break without remorse. Why have they undertaken to observe them? Who forced them? Have they not contracted these solemn obligations by the free determination of their will? By living in this manner they prove themselves truly imprudent; they arouse the anger of God, and reck-

lessly run on to perdition, instead of working out their salvation with fear and trembling.

II. The Religious who realizes the greatness and happiness of his vocation, who fears the justice of God if he fail to correspond to it, ought to strive to acquit himself nobly of all his duties, and to keep perfectly all his rules. It does not suffice to be a Religious by halves ; he must be one entirely. Do not think, says Our Lord, that I came to destroy the law and the prophets : I came not to destroy, but to fulfil : Amen, I say to you, not one tittle of it shall pass away till all be fulfilled. Jesus Christ here speaks of the rough, severe and bloody law of Moses, which He Himself fulfilled in all its rigor for love of us. The Religious ought to do the same for love of Him ; and not have to say that he left the world and embraced the religious life only to transgress its rules, which he should observe to the least iota. " The letter *i* is the smallest of all the letters," says St. Austin, " because it is made with a single stroke, having a point over it, to show that we must observe the smallest articles and that the least circumstances of the law must be fulfilled ;" and as this letter is the sign of perfection and the love of God, because it begins the sacred Name of Jesus, the greatest proof of affection for our Lord that a Religious can give consists in the punctual observance of all the rules and usages of his Institute.

III. Not only should a good Religious practise this exactness himself, but he should strive to make all the brethren faithful to the rules ; he should be replenished with zeal not only for himself, but for all, because it is a general interest that all observe the rule, since all have part in it ; for the house in which the rules, are most perfectly observed shall receive the graces and benedictions of God in the greatest abundance ; shall be in most repute before men, and therefore be most capable of aiding them

to work out their salvation. There shall be most peace, concord and joy among the members ; but to produce these good effects all must take in good part the zeal of Superiors for the observance of rule, and sustain them therein ; because superiors are responsible before the tribunal of God for this observance. The Order has confided to them its institute, its honor and its life; it must not be taken ill if they reprehend sloth and tepidity, because the relaxation of discipline would finally ruin the religious order. It is the interest of every one in a ship that the pilot guide it well, and oblige the sailors to do their duty, otherwise the vessel would be wrecked, and the whole crew involved in its destruction.

IV. The Religious must observe his rules with great courage, and notwithstanding many little infirmities to which men are sometimes exposed and which might serve as pretexts to obtain dispensations, generally keep them, confiding in the grace and goodness of God, which will aid him and will fortify his weakness. St. Fulgentius grew very feeble after he became a Religious, because he was of a delicate constitution and had been very tenderly reared, yet he never failed to observe all the fasts and austerities of his rule. Several of his brethren urged him to dispense with some of his mortifications, but he would never consent to this. Being so infirm, and being pressed by so many, it seems that he might reasonably have mitigated to some extent his rigid observance of monastic discipline, yet far from entertaining any design of leading a less mortified life, he abandoned to the paternal Providence of God the care of his body, and became more severe to himself, and more indulgent to others as he advanced in years. God blessed his resolution, and recompensed this fidelity and constancy in the observance of his rule, by giving him the strength he needed to observe it. The good Religious ought in like manner to expect assistance of Our

Lord in all the prudent efforts he makes to observe his rule most exactly.

Should a Religious be tempted to transgress his rule, let him say, as Our Lord did to St. John, who refused to baptize Him: *Suffer it to be so now, for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice;*[1] I must fulfil every part of my duty. A consideration very proper to restrain us in occasions of transgressing the rule is this: If my brethren, who have as much power and right to break the rule as I have, should transgress it, what would become of us all? Order would be driven from the house, and disorder and confusion would pervade it; the institute would soon cease to exist. Cassian relates that, while yet a novice, he fell asleep in his cell, and remained so until his Abbot came in, who, awakening him, said with a sigh: "John, how many of your brethren are at this moment speaking to God, and receiving into their souls the rays of His light, while you lose these precious advantages by your immortified slumbers!" Thus each Religious may say: How many Religious in this house, and in many other houses, keep faithfully the rules which I transgress, and acquire treasures of merits of which I deprive myself! By this means and the other means we have developed, the Religious may fortify himself against all attacks from what side soever; he will thereby acquit himself faithfully and constantly of his religious obligations; he will avoid sullying the splendor and holiness of the habit he wears; but let him strive to do this chiefly through a spirit of love for Our Lord, and through the motives which induced this Divine Saviour to accomplish perfectly all the ordinances of the old law.

[1] Matt. iii. 15.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LOVE OF OUR LORD MAKES US PRACTICE FAITH EXCELLENTLY.

I. Essence of Faith.—II. Formal and material object of Faith.

I. After having considered in general how the love of Our Lord inclines us to practice virtue, let us now consider in particular the principal means by which it operates these effects, beginning with faith. "*Charity believeth all things*," says St. Paul; it gives entire credence to all that the beloved says to the lover. But to comprehend well all that regards faith, it will be necessary to define its essence and nature, its qualities, and the mode of practising it most perfectly and meritoriously.

Faith is a theological virtue which tends directly to God by taking as its object one of His perfections; consequently it is more noble and excellent than the moral virtues which tend to God only indirectly, that is, which regard His service, the reformation of our life or the good of our neighbor. William of Paris, designing to discover to us the beauties of this virtue, makes it say: "I am the first life of the human understanding; I am the first light which dissipates the darkness of ignorance; I am the first luminous pillar which guides the true Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land; I am the first combatant in the spiritual warfare; I attack and conquer the citadel of man, that is, his understanding; I enter into it before any other virtue, and as a sign of my victory I plant therein the standard of the Son of God; I am the proof by which is demonstrated the fallacy of all heresies; I am the argument by which all human wisdom is reputed, and shown to be only folly; I am the helmet of salvation which defends the head of man, and shields his mind from the darts of error; I am the first torch of the house of God, the

first lamp of His temple, and, in the spiritual city of the Church, I am the morning star which announces the coming of the sun ; I am as the polar star of those who navigate the tempestuous sea of this life ; in fine, I am the first of the theological virtues, the foundation of all."

But St. Paul's definition is still better : "Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not:" he says *the substance*, first, because, as in natural things, the substance sustains the accidents, as the foundations sustain the walls, the roof and all other parts of an edifice; so, in supernatural things, faith is the basis of the spiritual building, sustaining its walls, that is to say, hope and charity, which is its roof, and the other virtues which are as divers apartments of this edifice ; without the support of the substance the accidents would perish, without foundations the house would fall into ruin ; in like manner, without faith, the virtues which conduct us to heaven would cease to exist. Secondly, according to the force of the Greek word, and the lucid explanations of St. Chrysostom and Theodoret, faith is called *the substance of things to be hoped for*, that is, the goods of Paradise of which we have now only the expectation, because it gives, as it were, an existence and reality to things we possess not, by making us regard them as certain, and as already visible to us ; so that faith, by the certainty it gives us, brings distant things before our eyes, rendering the future in some manner present to us ; and it is on this account that the old Syriac paraphrase thus explains the text of St. Paul : "Faith is a persuasion and an assurance of the things we hope for, and therefore have not yet received, and this assurance is as firm as if we already possessed them." St. Thomas uses a beautiful comparison to explain this text : "The things we hope for are enclosed in faith as the tree in the seed—as the tree which is not yet produced exists in some manner, since it is certainly in the seed whence it

will issue in due season—so the things of the other life which are still in the future as regards us, become in some manner present by faith, because what it announces and promises will infallibly happen in the time determined by God." The very word which the Hebrews used to designate faith comes from a verb which signifies *to place*, to establish a thing so firmly that nothing can, I will not say overthrow, but even shake it.

II. Moreover, St. Paul says that, *faith is the evidence of things which appear not*, that is, according to the interpretation of St. Thomas, the consent we give to the mysteries faith teaches which we see not, but which we regard as infallible truth; or according to St. Austin and St. Chrysostom, founded on the force of the Greek word, a demonstration, a certain proof, whereby the understanding is so convinced of the truths proposed to it that it cannot doubt them. The formal object of faith, that is, what it proposes to us to believe must be all the things God has revealed, either immediately by Himself, or by His organs, namely, the Prophets, the Apostles, and the Church, whether in her visible head, the Pope, or in her body assembled in General Council, presided over by the Pope. The formal cause or motive which excites us to believe, is the authority of God who speaks. There are two sorts of faith, one ordinary faith, common to all the faithful, who receive it in baptism, but in many weak and defective, as cleary appears by their lives, since their actions belie their glorious belief, and show that they believe only very imperfectly. The other is great, extraordinary and heroic ; the Wise Man speaks of it when he says : *There will be given him an excellent and extraordinary faith.*[1] This is the faith we should most earnestly desire, and do all in our power to acquire. We shall now treat of its qualities and its characteristics.

[1] Sap. iii. 14.

SECTION I.

QUALITIES OF FAITH.

I. It ought to be firm.—II. Simple.—III. Foundation of this firmness and simplicity.—IV. It ought to produce good works.—V. Naked.

I. Faith should be firm, excluding all doubt ; we should believe all the articles of faith, all which are proposed to us on the part of God; we ought to believe them more firmly, with more hope and repose of mind, than all we can know in this life by natural means, than the first principles of philosophy, than those mathematical demonstrations which have been called geometrical necessities because they force the mind, despite of all obstacles, to assent to them; we ought to believe these articles more firmly than we believe the proposition : The whole is greater than a part, etc., which at first sight, and by simple intelligence of the terms, is so clearly proved that it cannot be called in question ; than what we see with our eyes, hear with our ears, touch with our hands, than our own existence : because though all these things be realities of which there is no room to doubt, the things of faith are still more real, for they come to us on the authority of God, who can never deceive us, while we know the others only through our senses, which often deceive us, and by the assurance of our mind which, being enveloped in darkness, may easily be deceived ; so that there is nothing true in the universe of which we ought to be so certain, of which our understanding should be so fully convinced, as the mysteries of religion. "Faith," says St. Basil, "always powerful and victorious, exercises a greater ascendancy over minds than all the proofs reason and human science can furnish, because faith obviates all difficulties, not by the light of manifest evidence, but by the weight of the infallible au-

thority of God, which renders them incapable of forming any doubt." It was thus Abraham believed when, notwithstanding all the impediments of nature, he felt sure that he should see himself the father of a son, and, through him, of many nations. *He, against hope, believed in hope*, says St. Paul, that he might be made the father of many nations, according to what was said to him : So shall thy seed be. And he was not weak in faith, neither did he consider his body now dead, whereas he was almost a hundred years old, nor the dead womb of Sarah. In the promise of God he staggered not by distrust ; but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God : Most fully knowing that whatsoever He has promised He is able to perform.[1] The faith of Moses was so great that the same Apostle says of him that *he acted with the invisible God as though He were visible.* Similar was the faith of the famous and valiant Count de Montfort, who, being told that Our Lord in the Host had appeared visibly in the hands of the Priest, said to those who urged him to go see the miracle: "Go see it you who doubt, as for me I believe firmly the truth of the mystery of the Eucharist, as our Mother the Holy Church teaches it ; hence I hope to receive in heaven a crown more brilliant than those of the angels, for they, being face to face with God, have not the power to doubt." The noble Count St. Eleazer used to say that, with regard to matters of faith, he believed them so firmly that if all the theologians in the world strove to persuade him to the contrary, their logic would not have the slightest effect on him. And in effect faith ought to take precedence of reason demonstration, experience, and all other motives of certitude, with the true Christian and new man regenerated in Jesus Christ. "Consider," says St. Austin, "that you are not called reasonable, but faithful, since when any one is baptized we say : He has become one of the faithful."

[1] Rom. iv. 18.

II. Our faith ought to be simple, without examination · we should believe simply and innocently the articles proposed to us, without wishing to penetrate them, without examining thus curiously their causes ; we ought, on the contrary, take a singular pleasure in our incapacity to comprehend these secrets and sound these abysses, in order to captivate our mind more and more under the yoke of faith, as St. Paul advises. I have said *curiously*, because I would not condemn the respectful researches of wise men and Doctors of the Church, whom God has appointed to instruct others, but it must be remembered that the greatest light by which our steps can be enlightened is the light of faith ; for natural reason in these high things is but as the meteors which often appear in the obscurity of the night to travellers, and which, instead of guiding them safely, conduct them to swamps and precipices. "It is unnecessary that we dive into the mysteries of religion," says Tertullian; "the Increated Wisdom has revealed them to us ; we have no more questions to ask, once we receive the Gospel. Why mingle together Athens and Jerusalem, the Academy and the Church ? Our doctrine is learned at the Portico of Solomon, who tells us that *we must seek God in simplicity of heart.* He alludes to these beautiful words of the Sage : Have sentiments worthy of the goodness of God, seek Him in simplicity of heart, for those who do not tempt Him find Him ; He shows Himself to those who believe in Him ; for perverse thoughts separate from God ; curious examens of His power show the folly of those who are not simple ; they shall never possess true wisdom ; for wisdom will not enter a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sin : for the Holy Ghost, the source of all wisdom and discipline, abominates the deceiptful man, and withdraws from those who have imprudent thoughts.[1]

[1] Sap. i. 4.

Certainly, says St. Chrysostom, since the works of God incomparably surpass the capacity of our minds, the thoughts whereby we seek to penetrate the abysses of faith are always accompanied with folly, and resemble labyrinths which it is very easy to enter, but from which it is nearly impossible to come forth; these thoughts spring from pride, and as proud minds are ashamed to believe, or admit that they cannot understand, they entangle themselves in difficulties from which they cannot easily issue. Is it true, then, proud, miserable man, if asked how the sun and stars were created, how the earth, with all its riches, was evoked from chaos, how thou thyself wert formed in thy mother's womb, how thy heart and brain and bone and blood were organized out of the same matter, how parts so varied and numerous were so compactly united and so admirably fitted one to the other? How didst thou grow in the narrow prison of the mother's womb, how didst thou live therein without respiring air, seeing that under such circumstances thou couldst not now live one quarter of an hour? Thou art not ashamed to own that thou canst not answer these things, and when there is question of sublimities elevated above the comprehension of Angels, thou wilt not avoid thy ignorance, thou makest temerarious efforts to understand them. Fool, the shame is not the inability to comprehend them, but the daring to sound them!

Speaking of Rahab who received the spies, and of whom St. Paul says that, her faith saved her from the unhappy fate of her fellow citizens, St. Chrysostom praises the simplicity of her faith, and adds: "This woman did not examine what the spies said, neither did she reason with herself thus: How can it be possible that the captives and fugitives now wandering in the desert will capture a city so strong and so well provided as ours? Had she argued thus she had been lost." Those of the Israelites, on the

contrary, who, hearing of the prodigious strength and power of the countries they were to conquer, yielded to diffidence, notwithstanding the Divine assurance that they should vanquish their enemies even without fighting them, were deprived by their infidelity of the happiness God had promised to their faith. I ask you what could be more strange or more opposed to reason than to command a father to sacrifice his only and most innocent son? And yet this good father put himself in readiness to do it, without discussing the commandment or adducing arguments to prove its unreasonableness; he considered only the dignity and wisdom of Him who commanded. Another person, wishing to show himself more reasonable, refused to strike a prophet, as he had been ordered to do, because the thing seemed to him improper; but his disobedience was soon punished, for a lion rushed upon him and devoured him, not far from the place where the fault had been committed. Saul having been ordered by God to put the Amalekites to the sword, with their flocks and herds, found it convenient to spare the king, and to set aside the best and fattest of the flocks for sacrifice: in recompense for his fine reasoning on the subject he was overwhelmed with many evils, and finally lost his kingdom. Convinced by these reasons and examples, let us beware of seeking from God the reason of His commands; let us avoid scrutinizing His mysteries, however hard they appear to us; but, on the contrary, let us humbly submit in the most perfect tranquility to faith, the mother of all good; let us seek shelter in its bosom, as in the secure port of salvation.

As new born babes, says St. Peter, *desire the rational milk without guile.* The Apostle here speaks of the mysteries of faith, which he compares to the milk contained in the breasts of the Church, which are the Old and New Testaments. The breasts are placed over the heart which

warms them and produces the sweet liquor with which they are replenished : the two Testaments in like manner repose on the bosom of the Church, which is founded on the Holy Ghost, who is its heart ; from these mysterious breasts flows the milk of the doctrine of faith with which the elect are nourished. This doctrine is compared to milk, 1, because of its whiteness and purity ; for it proposes only truths, and permits no mixture of deceit ; it commands or counsels only virtuous actions, forbids all sin, even an idle word ; 2, because of its sweetness, for it is a source of admirable peace to all who believe and practice it ; 3, because of its taste, because there is no knowledge which can nourish the soul as faith nourishes it ; 4, finally because it is the aliment of children, that is, of humble and submissive spirits who, like children, believe things simply, without examining or sounding them. Faith is not for the proud, but for the humble, says St. Austin : humility is its seal and element, because it necessarily demands lowliness of mind.

III. To prove the necessity of the unshaken firmness and childlike simplicity with which we ought to believe all the mysteries of faith, it suffices to say that it is but reasonable to give a person as much credence as he merits : generally speaking, the foundation of credibility is the idea we have of the knowledge of the person who speaks, the things he tells us, and the opinion we have formed of his goodness ; our belief is firm in proportion as we think that he is not deceived in his knowledge, that he knows well what he says because he is wise and prudent ; that he will not deceive us because he loves the truth and fears God. Thus, in transacting our business, we give more credit to a learned man than to an ignorant man ; to a learned man who is virtuous than to one who is not so. To apply this to our subject—since it is just to have faith in a person in proportion to his merit, and that he merits

it in proportion to his veracity—it evidently follows that, since God is the first and essential Truth, since His knowledge extends to all things and is infinitely perfect, since He is essentially true in His words and can know things only as they are, and can speak them only as He knows them ; we ought to have the most respectful and submissive faith in all He reveals to us, and believe His mysteries with infinite firmness and simplicity. This reason, well weighed, renders the practice of faith easy, and elevates the soul to believe all that comes from God, not only without questioning, but also with perfect repose ; she examines nothing which God deigns to say to her, but receives all with perfect simplicity and confidence. The child at the mother's breast takes what it sees not, sometimes he will even close his eyes when he might see, as though he confided entirely in his mother and in the love she bears him ; in like manner the soul sucks the milk of faith from the bosom of the Church which she sees not, she reposes on the infinite wisdom and goodness of God who can teach her nothing but what is true, and give her nothing that is not good. It is on this divine juice that the just man lives, as St. Paul observes when he says, after Habacuc : *The just man liveth by faith.* The faith of St. Teresa was so firm that it seemed to her that she could convert all the heretics in the world from their errors ; and so simple that she said that the less she comprehended a mystery the more she believed it and the more devotion it excited in her ; she tasted a singular pleasure in not comprehending it ; hence she never demanded the reason of a mystery, but at once acquiesced in it, and silenced all objections by saying : "God has revealed it." Therefore she particularly loved all the ceremonies of the Church, indulgences, rosaries, holy water, and other things that appear minute, and the use of which, as she assures us, produced in her great

effects. When near death, she thanked God with great affection for having placed her in His Church, and often repeated with ardor : O Lord, I am a child of the Holy Catholic Church!

What ought also to excite us to believe firmly and simply all the articles of faith is, the powerful motives and interior reasons which discover their truth, and which made the Royal Prophet say that they are so well established that nothing can be more worthy of belief : Thy testimonies are *exceedingly credible.*[1] If what faith teaches is obscure, the arguments upon which it leans are evident, and so evident that only fools can doubt of them. Hence the learned John Picus, Prince of Mirandola says : "It is great folly not to believe the Gospel, which apostles have proclaimed, which many saints and sages have preached, which the blood of martyrs has cemented, which miracles have proved, and which reason confirms, which the elements and insensible creatures have announced, which the demons themselves are constrained to acknowledge ; not to receive a doctrine glorious with so many victories, radiant with so many crowns, laden with the spoils of all its enemies. And, not to speak of any other motive, though we should consider only the qualities of this doctrine and the manner of its announcement, a doctrine which has destroyed all the religions of the universe, which has declared a man fastened to a gibbet to be the true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, which has taught us to fly honors, riches and pleasures, to seek abasement, poverty and misery, for which nature has so much abhorrence : a doctrine preached by twelve simple, unlettered men, most of whom were fishers, a doctrine universally received with general consent, and in so short a time ; it must be acknowledged that all this is incontestable evidence of its truth, and that whoever disputes it, or will not admit it,

[1] Ps.

must be very foolish. Let us set before us this great miracle : would it be possible to perform a similar one in the age in which we live? If ten or twelve rude, uncouth fishermen, who had never associated with any but persons of their own sphere, now undertook to change the belief of the city of Paris, in which there are so many judicious persons, replenished with so much knowledge, so eminent in literary pursuits, so elevated in dignity, so powerful by their riches, so grounded in religion ; to bring this about, it would be necessary to give them other minds, new strength, and the success of this effort would be one of the greatest and most visible effects of the power of God. If, then, after the promulgation of the Gospel by twelve men, and that not only one city, but many cities, provinces, countries, and even the whole world, have embraced it ; if kings, philosophers and orators have not only submitted to it, but in many instances defended it at the peril of their lives ; whoever makes a difficulty about embracing it declares himself blind and deaf : blind not to see truths which have been palpable to the wisest ; deaf not to hear a publication made with the noise of so many trumpets."

IV. Our faith ought to be lively, efficacious and productive of good works. To comprehend this it must be remembered that faith may be living or dead : it is alive when it operates the actions of life, that is, works of virtue done in the state of grace ; it is dead when it neglects these : whence that celebrated saying of St. James, "Faith without works is dead ;" as a body is living when it does the actions of life, of which the soul is the principle, and is dead when abandoned by the soul, and therefore it can no longer produce them. And as the soul is not absolutely necessary to the body to render it a body, but only to render it a *living* body, so faith, as the Council of Trent has defined it, can truly exist without charity, but it cannot thus exercise the works of life.

It is this lively and working faith which we ought to have. Let us go to God sincerely and with a full faith, says St. Paul, that is, as St. Thomas explains, with a faith which submits to all the truths God has revealed, and which joins action to belief. Faith, says St. Austin, is to man what the root is to the tree, which uses the rain to produce fruits. Elsewhere the same Saint says : The name of faith is given to belief in Jesus Christ : it is difficult for one who has this faith firmly established in his heart to lead a bad life. The very word (*fides*) indicates that he must do what it teaches ; it is composed of two syllables, the first signifying *to do, facto*, the second to *say, dicto*. If, then, I ask you whether you believe, and you answer in the affirmative, I add : Your word is not sufficient to assure me of this ; you must prove it by your works ; do what you say and there will be no room to doubt of your faith. In the same sense St. Gregory says : "He certainly believes who practices what he believes." Experience shows that the certainty of finding a treasure will make a man delve the earth for it ; nay, even the probability of finding it, will inflame to seek it. Merchants daily go to the ends of the earth, in the midst of a thousand inconveniences ; soldiers expose themselves to the evident perils of war, through the mere hope of gaining riches or glory—a hope often delusive. What, therefore, should not faith do in us, if it be alive, since it gives us an infallible certainty of the accomplishment of the great promises made to us, not of light and perishable goods, but an eternal kingdom of riches and glory ? What courage should it not give us ? What ardor should it not kindle in our hearts to do all that shall be necessary to secure these inestimable treasures ? The knowledge of divine things, says Theodoret, is a great good, an immense treasure ; yet it cannot render a man perfect and happy, unless it be reduced to practice ; not only must we know what faith teaches us of God, but

we must also do His will, and submit to His law. Those who wish to become great proficients in painting or sculpture, are not content with studying the principles of art and the manner of working, they apply these principles in practice ; so, also, the faithful should not content themselves with barely knowing the truths faith teaches, they must perfect this knowledge by acting in accordance with it.

Faith and good works mutually aid each other : faith produces good works, and good works nourish faith. And, as the author of the *Imperfect Work* says, the wick of a lamp may be ignited though there is no oil in the lamp, but the light it gives cannot be increased or maintained ; so, the torch of faith may be lit in a soul without good works, but it cannot be preserved without them. Hence bad men easily embrace false opinions, and their transition to infidelity is easy. St. Gregory says, explaining these words of Joab : *He hath struck them as being wicked, in open sight,*[1] (by the *wicked* he understands great sinners, by *open sight* the Holy Church in which alone shines the sun of justice, and souls can be enlightened with true light,): God, by a just chastisement, often punishes those whom He sees in the Church revelling in their vices, and who, as St. Paul observes, believe in God, confess the truth of His mysteries, but belie their faith by their works ; God punishes them by permitting that after having lost grace, they lose also the holy knowledge they had of his mysteries, and that without any other persecution than that of their vices, they deny the faith. It is of these David speaks when he says : *Destroy Jerusalem to its foundations,*[2] leave not a stone upon a stone. When the malign spirits have ruined in a soul the edifice of virtue, they sap its foundation, which is faith. St. Cyprian[3] had already enunciated these remarkable words : "Let no one think that vir

[1] Job. xxxiv. 26. [2] Ps. cxxxvi. 7. [3] Lib. *de Unit. Eccles.*

tuous men and good Christians ever leave the bosom of the Church ; it is not the wheat that the wind lifts, but the chaff ; trees profoundly rooted are not blown down by the breeze, but those which have no roots. It is decayed fruits that fall off trees, and not sound ones ; heretics are formed by bad Catholics, as sickness is engendered by corrupt humors : at first faith languishes in them because of their vices ; then it becomes sick ; next it dies, because, since sin is essentially a blindness of spirit, the more a man heaps sin on sin, the more he multiplies his crimes, the more blind he becomes ; his faith grows weaker and weaker, the light of this divine torch decreases, and soon the least wind of temptation or doubt suffices to extinguish it." To use another comparison : when the soul leaves the body, the body dies and remains without motion or beauty ; yet it preserves in this state the appearance of a human body, at least for some time ; the members separate, in a short time they putrefy and fall into dust ; it first loses the form of a living body, and then of a human body ; charity is the soul and life of faith—when charity abandons the soul faith is dead—it is there in its dead state, but it will soon cease to be there at all. St. Paul recommends Timothy *to preserve always a good conscience*, and to practice virtue with care, because, adds he, some rejecting this have made *shipwreck concerning the faith.*[1] Elsewhere he says : The desire of money is the root of all evil, which some coveting have erred from the faith.[2] It is certain that a bad life easily induces a bad faith, because a soul that loves vice and libertinage will naturally hate, or at least, find burdensome, the laws which forbid what it loves, and sinks by its own weight to a doctrine more accommodating and more tolerant. It is easy for a man to condemn a religion which enjoins things he does not wish to do, and to approve the sect which frees him from

[1] Tim. i. 19. [2] Ibid. vi. 10.

all constraint, as more favorable to his desires. Verily, our affections naturally follow our opinions ; we love and honor what we esteem ; but it is not the less true that our affections have great power over our opinions, as we see by those who love ; love makes them regard as beautiful persons naturally ugly, and praise with excess actions worthy even of blame : so a vicious, unruly will may easily corrupt the understanding in the matter of faith, and cause it to forsake good opinions and adopt bad ones.

V. The fourth quality of perfect faith is that it be naked, that is, that it lean on no consolation, no vision, no reason or knowledge, natural or supernatural, but on the simple revelation of God, on whom it must rest entirely, rejecting all other support ; in order to ground itself firmly on this basis, it must close the eyes to all these lights and walk in this obscurity. This faith is heroic, it is the faith of great souls ; it is most meritorious, because the less we know of the thing proposed to our belief the greater is our faith in submitting our understanding to it ; this is what made St. Gregory say : "Faith is not meritorious when it admits what can be proved by human reasoning." This is the surest faith, and the least subject to the illusions of the enemy ; for therein lying can find no place ; pure truth is disengaged from all that can counterfeit it. It is this faith which most disposes our minds for union with God which can be operated perfectly only by two means : in the state of glory—and this is the most perfect, for then the light which irradiates the understaning shows God as He is, and unites it without veil to this Adorable Being; and in the state of grace, that is to say, by faith, which prepares the mind for the happiness in a more efficacious manner than any other means that can be used here below ; because according to the axiom of philosophers, since there ought to be some proportion between the means and the end, and since all consolation, all sentiments of devotion, all visions,

all interior words, all reasons, and, in general, all that our understanding can conceive, our will taste, our imagination represent to itself, our appetite desire, our senses feel, can have no proportion or resemblance to God. Since God is not only every good we can imagine, but also infinite good, which we cannot imagine, it follows that faith, which proposes Him as He is, One in Essence, Three in Persons, good, beautiful, wise and perfect, goodness, beauty wisdom and perfection itself, shows Him to us as He is, though by a confused and obscure knowledge—a knowledge which is true and sure under all its aspects—it is then the most certain means to conduct our minds to God, and the strongest place to attach and unite them to Him. Hence, whoever wishes to go to God, surely and in an elevated manner, ought to despoil himself of all earthly helps, avoid all deceitful paths, to walk by naked faith, to tend to light by obscurity, to enlighten one's self by becoming blind; for that saying of the holy Prophet Isaiah is true: *If you believe not neither shall you understand.*

SECTION II.

OF THE PRACTICE OF FAITH.

I. What should be done in order to render an act of faith excellent.—II. What acts of faith should be made on.—III. Other manners.—IV. Above all, faith must be effective.

Have the faith of God,[1] that is, according to the language of Scripture, have great and strong faith, free from all doubt, simple and without research, active, independent of all assurances from heaven or from earth, depending solely on the revelation of God; a great faith, not in seeing mysteries more clearly, but in believing them in greater

[1] Mark xi. 22.

obscurity and with unshaken firmness : have this faith and exercise the acts of it continually.

I. To make excellent acts of faith, the mind must attach itself as perfectly as possible to the motives of faith, that is, as we have already said, the infinite infallibility of the word of God, and his knowledge ; it must be convinced that God can know things only as they are, and can enunciate things only as He knows them, that as He cannot be deceived, so neither can He deceive ; we must form to ourselves the highest and most sublime idea of this perfection of God, and through this consideration produce vigorously the acts of faith, believing all that God has said, in general and in particular, by Himself or by His organs, and believe it because He has said it. But to elucidate this still better we shall speak of such particular points as seem to us most necessary.

II. When we say the *Credo*, in which are contained the principal points of our belief, we must vivify the act of faith if we would render it pleasing to God and meritorious to ourselves ; and not pronounce it as many Christians do, without application of mind, like the parrot of Cardinal Ascanius, of which Rhodigin speaks, which learned the creed from some one, and used to recite it daily. First, elevate your heart to God, protesting to Him that you believe all contained in this symbol ; then recite it, and one recital in this manner will be more profitable than many others performed negligently and by routine.

We should not be content with the symbol alone ; it is very useful and advantageous to make often acts of faith on the most important truths of religion, and of those which are most necessary to be remembered, as the four last things, etc. You can then make an act of faith on death thus : I believe, Oh my Lord and my God, that the decisive moment of my eternity will surely arrive, that I shall certainly die, that my soul will leave my body, that

my body will return to dust and be eaten by worms, and that Thou wilt render to my soul according to its works. I believe that I shall one day be obliged to quit relations, friends, honors, pleasures, and all the goods of this life, and that I shall return no more to enjoy them. Yes, I believe it because Thou hast said it ; Thou, who art the first and the essential Truth.

On judgment. Ah! terrible day! frightful day! I believe that I shall surely be presented before the judgment seat of God, there to be judged according to my works, to be sentenced to life or death, salvation or damnation : yes, I believe it, and I tremble to think of that great accounting day, and the importance of the sentence there pronounced.

On Heaven. Lifting your eyes to heaven, say : I believe that far away there is a place of delights, where the just see God without veil, and shall for all eternity see, love, praise and enjoy Him incessantly, with sovereign glory and abundance of all joys, and that I shall participate in their happiness if I live well during the short period of my life.

On Hell. Casting your eyes towards the earth, say : Ah! frightful dwelling! unfortunate sojourn! Yes, I believe there is a hell, a prison of divine justice, where the wicked are punished with the most horrible torments, without the faintest hope of release, and I believe that I myself shall be condemned there if I live badly and die impenitent, which may God forbid!

It is very important to engrave deeply these last ends on the mind, and this can be best done by making frequent acts of faith in them ; this remembrance shall, as the Sage says, imprint a certain fear on our minds, and excite us to watch over our actions with great care that we may never sin, or at least fall but rarely and through pure frailty. It will also be profitable to draw from these acts some moral conclusions for the regulation of our lives. After the act

of faith on the truth of death, we may conclude that we should not be attached to anything here below, since we shall have to quit all, and we cannot leave without sorrow that which we posses with love. After the act of faith on judgment, we should resolve to live well, since all our actions will be submitted to so severe a scrutiny, and if ill, subjected to so terrible a punishment. We must practise the same with regard to the following acts, and our resolutions will be strong and efficacious in proportion as these acts are made with more conviction and perfection.

On our end. An excellent act of faith is to believe that God is our end, and our beatitude ; and to make it we must say to him ; Yes, my God, I firmly believe that Thou art my end and happiness both for this life and for the next ; that Thou alone art capable of giving perfect content to my heart, that happiness cannot be found out of Thee, and that therefore it is folly to seek it in riches, honors, pleasures, or in any creature whatever.

On the presence of God. This act of faith will serve as a strong bridle to restrain us from evil, and a powerful spur to excite us to the practice of good works : I believe, my God and my Sovereign Lord, that Thou art present here and in all places, that Thy eyes are continually fixed on me to see what I do, and Thy ears ever open to hear what I say ; that Thou weighest all my works, all my words and my most secret thoughts, in order one day to recompense what is good, and condemn and punish what is bad.

On the being of God and our nothingness. We will speak of this at greater length in the chapter on humility ; here we shall say but a few words : I believe most firmly, O my God, that Thou art essentially a necessary Being, sovereign and independent ; and I believe with equal firmness that I am essentially a mere nothing, a miserable being, entirely dependent on Thee ; that Thou hast drawn me out of nothing, in the obscurity of which I had dwelt

for eternity, to call me to life by giving me the being I have, and which Thou dost preserve to me ; that I am in such absolute and continual dependence on Thee, that if Thou shouldst cease for a moment to sustain me, I should immediately fall back into my original nothingness, and so remain for all eternity. I believe that of my self I am nothing as to soul or body, as to the goods of nature, grace and glory ; and that whatever I have or am is Thy gift, the result of Thy bounty.

On the Providence of God. This act is of great importance : we must firmly believe that God watches in a particular manner over all that passes in the universe ; that He does and ordains all, sin excepted, which He only permits ; and that He particulary watches over what regards us—poverty, afflictions, sickness, death, to the least movement, and to the fall of a hair of our head : if you be a Religious, you should believe that He does and orders all in a still more special manner, as regards your dwelling, your exercises, and all that relates to the authority of your Superiors ; you must excite in yourself great respect for all the orders He gives you, all the dispositions He makes of you, to a perfect abandonment to His wise conduct, to an entire confidence in His solicitude, firmly believing that He watches carefully over your least concerns. This act of faith will be a source of profound peace and high perfection.

When making the sign of the Cross, in order not to make the sign of life by a dead movement, as is commonly done, we should produce acts of faith in the three mysteries it recalls : the unity of God in three Persons, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and His death for the salvation of men.

III. We may, besides these, choose other subjects on which to make acts, as on the points denied by heretics, on what we think will make most impression on our minds,

and be most profitable to us. It is also very good to vary the manner of making them, in order to keep the mind attentive, and to avoid disgust. We may at one time make them simply thus : I believe such or such a mystery, because God has revealed it ; again, by interrogating the soul thus : Believest thou not, my soul, that there is one God in three Persons, co-eternal and consubstantial ? that He is present everywhere, that His eyes are always fixed on thee ? that there is a heaven to reward the good and a hell to punish the wicked ? Then respond to each article : Yes, I believe it. Or we may figure to ourselves that Jesus Christ puts to us the question He put to Martha, when, after having said on the occasion of the death of Lazarus, that He was the resurrection and the life, and that whoever had lost life should recover it by faith, He added : Believest thou this ? The Saint at once replied : *Yes, Lord, I believe that Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.*[1] So let us think that the Lord says to our heart : Believest thou that I am thy God, thy life, thy beatitude, that I became man for thee, that I am corporally in the Eucharist ? etc. ; and let us respond, Yes, Lord, I believe. Afterwards let us thank this Divine Saviour with much love for having enlightened us with His lights, and caused us to be born in the bosom of His Holy Church, and enriched us with the precious gift of faith, and then pray and conjure Him by the perfection of His infinite veracity, which merits an infinite faith, to give us this virtue in an eminent degree, saying to Him with the Apostles : *Lord, increase our faith,*[2] render it every day more firm, more simple, more lively and more pure.

IV. We may produce acts of faith in all these different ways, but we must, above all, render our faith effective, that is, fruitful in good works, and make our conduct worthy of our belief. The wise Prince of Mirandola,

[1] John xi. 25. [2] Luke xvii. 5.

after having said, as we have already related, that it is a signal folly not to believe the Gospel, notwithstanding the powerful arguments which establish its truth, adds : "But it is a still greater folly to admit the truth of the Gospel, and at the same time live as if we doubted it." *What doth it profit a man to say he hath faith, if he have not works?* asks St. James. *You have faith, prove it by your works.* You cannot prove it otherwise. Let charity animate your faith, said St. Bernard, let your actions show it. The same Saint, explaining these amorous words of the Spouse : Stay me up with flowers, compass me with fruits, *because I languish with love*, says : "By flowers we understand faith, and by fruits works." It is necessary that the flower precede the fruits, that faith precede good works and guide them, for St. Paul says : "Without faith it is impossible to please God ;" there are no good works without faith, as there are no fruits without flowers ; faith without works is a dead faith, the blossom is useless unless it be followed by the fruit. Hence, during the absence of her Beloved, which love makes seem very long and tedious to her, the Spouse asks at the same time the odoriferous flowers of faith and the savory fruits of good works, to gather therefrom some solace and some repose. St. Paul, exhorting Philemon to receive with charity and meekness his slave Onesimus, who had fled from him, gives this reason to excite him to do so : in order to render *your faith efficacious, and that you may show* by the exercise of good works *that it is true.* In his Epistle to the Hebrews, after having defined faith in the manner we have already shown, he proves by many examples drawn from the holy Patriarchs of the Old Law that faith excited them to live holily, and to do and suffer great things for the service of God. *By faith Abel offered to God a sacrifice exceeding that of Cain. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered Isaac. By faith Moses denied himself to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter.*

And what shall I say more? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, Barac, Sampson, Jephte, and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises. They were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were put to death by the sword.[1]

Thus it is by works that we can judge of faith, and learn its force. Do, then, as St. Paul said to the Christians of Corinth, *prove to yourselves if you have faith.*[2] Your word is not a sufficient guarantee for your faith, neither are your sentiments; you must show it in works. You believe that death will strip you of all things here below, that in judgment you must render a strict account of your whole life, that there is a hell to punish the wicked and a heaven to reward the good; you believe that God is present always and everywhere. But are your actions conformable to your belief? Are they the doings of a man who is firmly convinced of these truths? No, certainly, for if you were firmly and feelingly persuaded of them, it would be impossible for you to live as you do live, to take the license you continually take; you would soon avoid evil, however difficult it might be for you to do so, and practise virtue, however great your natural repugnance may be. If you thought that a viand, otherwise very pleasing, contained poison, you would die of starvation rather than consent to use it. If you were sure of gaining millions of dollars by giving a cent to the poor, or by saying one little prayer, you would deem it foolish and absurd to neglect to acquire such an immense treasure when the means of acquiring it were so very easy. St. Macarius, of Egypt, speaking on this subject, says: "All who believe in the Gospel ought to examine themselves, or request some spiritual persons to examine them, in order to find out whether their faith is real or only apparent," and we may learn the degree of faith we give the great truths of re-

[1] Hebrews xi. [2] II Cor. xiii. 5.

ligion by the degree we give to those which are less important. Thus : if I ask you whether you believe that God will render you a sharer in the beatitude, and co-heir in the glory of His Son, Jesus Christ, that you are destined to reign eternally with Him in Heaven, provided you follow His commandments—you answer in the affirmative, and add that, therefore, you have consecrated yourself to His service. To know if you speak truly, for your word is not enough, I must examine whether you are attached to this life, whether you are solicitous for your food and raiment, despite of the words of Christ, which admonish us to banish all these cares from our hearts ; for if you believe firmly that God will give you the eternal and immense goods of paradise, you ought to believe with greater reason that He will give you those of earth which are necessary for you, which are poor and transient, and which he gives even to His enemies and to animals : if you are too much agitated by these terrestrial cares, if you have not perfect confidence in the promise He has made you, namely, to give according to your necessities, be certain that neither have you confidence that He will give you celestial goods ; but imagining yourself to have faith in these great truths you have only a shadow of it, since you believe not truths of less importance and less magnitude.

Nothing is more just than these remarks of St. Macarius, for it is a general principle that whatever has movement emanates from an animated source ; even inanimate things come under this rule, for we call water which flows, *living* water, and water which has no movement *dead* water : be certain, then, that if faith is living in you it will produce and operate great effects.

Hence, when you shall have made an act of faith, it will be very useful to animate yourself to the practice of some good work which corresponds to it, and thus cause the flower to bear its fruit. After an act of faith in the pres-

ence of God, you can say: Since I believe that the eye of God is always fixed on me, I ought to watch carefully over myself, that I may do nothing displeasing to Him. I will therefore be circumspect in my words, orderly in my movements, attentive to my prayers. After an act of faith on the merits of good works, say: Since I believe that the merit of every good action is so great, I will strive all my life, and especially to-day, to perform as many good works as I can. After an act of faith in the Real Presence, when you assist at Holy Mass, say: To prove in sight of angels, men, demons and all creatures, that I firmly believe Thou art really present under these species, with Thy Body and Soul, and all Thy glory, I adore Thee in this Sacrament in the depths of my heart, I adore Thee exteriorly, humbly bending my knees before Thy majesty, and prostrating myself with sentiments of most profound modesty. We can in like manner render our acts of faith practical with regard to all other articles of our belief.

But ere I conclude this section, I wish to establish a principle of great importance. Among the mysteries and truths which religion proposes for our belief, some regard our understanding; for example, that there is but one God in Three Persons, that the Second Person became man for our salvation, that there is an eternal recompense for the good, and an eternal punishment for the wicked, etc., these are styled speculative truths; others, which refer to the will, and serve to regulate our manners and our lives, are styled moral and practical truths; for instance, that the person who wishes to be saved, ought, from the time he comes to the use of reason, to fly vice and practice virtue, observing the commandments of God, etc. Among the speculative truths, some are entirely beyond our comprehension; we would even deny them did we rely on the testimony of our senses; so also among the moral truths,

some are more difficult to be believed than others ; as for example, the beatitudes which place riches in poverty, joy in sadness, honors in infamy ; also the doctrine of the Apostle, St. James : *My brethren, count it all joy when divers afflictions befall you,*[1] and that of the Prince of the Apostles : *If you be reproached for the Name of Christ, you shall be blessed : for that which is of the honor, glory and power of God resteth upon you,*[2] and other similar truths which are repugnant to our will, to our senses and to our judgment—at least to the ordinary judgment of men.

But since all these are indubitable and infallible, because they emanate from the same principle, from Truth itself which cannot deceive, and since we believe speculative truths, though they be infinitely elevated above our understanding, since we never question them because God has revealed them, thus rendering homage and respect to His honor and His word, we ought also, for the same motives, firmly believe the moral truths, trampling under foot all opposition the will and senses offer, not noticing their repugnances, and by a generous effort of heroic faith, striving to reduce our belief to practice.

SECTION III.

CONCLUSION.

I. Excellence of faith.—II. Its utility.—III Its light.—IV. Its sweetness. V. The love of Our Lord should make us practise it.—VI. Of temptations against faith.—VII. Remedies.

Let us strive to practise these acts of faith, let us not be content with a mere sterile faith : let us render our faith active ; and since we have the honor to bear the beautiful name of *faithful*, let us show by our works that

[1] Ep. St. James i. 2. [2] I. Peter iv. 14.

we are really faithful ; the excellence of faith, the glory and love of Our Lord, and our own interest should excite to this.

I. Faith ennobles, purifies and elevates our understanding to the highest point of perfection it is capable of attaining in this life, since it makes known with the greatest certainty the most sublime truths, declaring to the human intellect what the eternal researches of the most learned could never discover, and shielding it from all errors. It is, as Rupert observes, the noble and generous air which distinguishes the truly great ; it is, says William of Paris, the mark of strong minds ; and he adds : "Faith is the most visible sign of the strength and generosity of our souls, for, as our will best shows its courage by loving things painful, difficult and ignominious, so it is certain that the strength and vigor of our mind become most apparent when we believe mysteries which are infinitely above our capacity." St. Leo had said before him : "It belongs only to strong and lofty minds, to souls truly faithful and solidly enlightened, to believe without hesitation what they cannot see with their corporal eyes, and to raise their desires to what they see not." Those, then, are strangely deceived who imagine that strength of mind consists in questioning the truth of an article of faith, in turning into ridicule a ceremony of the Holy Church, in withdrawing their belief from what they cannot understand, and who, as St. Austin relates of himself when he was wholly enveloped in the shades of the darkness of heresy, will not believe anything contrary to their errors unless it be made as clear as that three and four make seven, and who take for their rule of faith only their eyes and their hands. Little worms of the earth ! miserable mushrooms of a night ! ephemeral atoms ! they imagine they have strong intellects, while they are, mentally and physically, mere weakness ; they ape the piercing vision of the eagle

while they hardly possess the dim orbs of the owl ; they do not comprehend that nothing is more easy than to believe a thing is true when reason and the senses demonstrate its truth ; the most boorish and stolid intellects are capable of this, because it is conformable to their nature ; but to believe a thing is true, when we should be obliged to admit its fallacy did we allow ourselves to be guided by our natural lights—this is to show our strength and to rise above ourselves.

II. Moreover, faith procures us such great goods and advantages that we ought to be very careful often to produce its acts. The invincible martyr, St. Lawrence, exhorting St. Hippolytus who was yet a pagan, in whose custody the holy deacon was, to renounce his false religion and embrace that of Jesus Christ, said to him : " Oh Hyppolytus ! fear not to give yourself to Jesus Christ ; if you believe in Him, I will show you treasures, and I can give you the assurance of eternal life." The celebrated martyr, St. Tatianus, surnamed Dulas, said to the prefect, who, on the part of the emperor, promised him great honors if he would adore the gods of the empire : " Keep your honors and your dignities ; God forbid that I should seek them ; the only advancement I covet is the advancement in the faith of my Lord Jesus Christ." Faith, the first of the theological virtues, is a sourse of great merit ; each act of faith confers on the soul great riches, powerfully fortifying it against the assaults of the enemy, and causing it to surmount them. *This is the victory that overcometh the world, our faith,*[1] says St. John. Hence St. Peter, after having said that *the devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour,* adds, *whom resist ye, strong in faith,*[2] and you shall always become victorious. With reason does the Holy Scripture compare faith to a shield : In all things take the shield of faith wherewith you may be able

[1] I. Ep. St.John v. 4. [2] I. Peter v. 9.

to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. Why? Because as the shield is the most universally defensive armor the soldier uses, since it covers the whole body, and parries every stroke, while the casque protects only the head, the cuirass the breast, the gauntlets the hands; so, faith is the most universal means the Christian can employ in the spiritual warfare to ward off the attacks of his enemies, and resist manfully all temptations, while the other virtues only defend on one point: humility defends against pride, meekness against anger, temperance against gluttony, etc.

III. Moreover faith enlightens the mind in an admirable manner; for belief produces intelligence; night is the cause of day, and the obscure light of Aurora heralds the dazzling effulgence of the sun, *Perhaps*, says David, the *darkness* which envelopes the mysteries of faith *shall hide me*, and then he adds: I ought not to be afraid that the obscurity of faith shall deceive me, for *before Thee, Lord, darkness shall not be dark, and night shall be as the light of day, the darkness and the light are alike to Thee.*[1] And, in effect, the more simply a soul acts, the less she cares to dive into the things of faith, the better is she disposed to receive irradiations of God, and to know these things with admirable sweetness even in this life. This sweet truth wrung from St. Anselm these beautiful words: "I thank Thee, good Lord, because Thou showest me so clearly what I formerly saw only in the shades of faith, that though I should not wish to believe what Thou art, it would be impossible for me not to comprehend it." And theologians teach us, that in the other life faith shall be recompensed according to the excellence it shall have reached in this, by a special ray of light which will enable us to see with greater or less clearness as we shall have believed with more or less perfection.

[1] Ps. cxxxviii. 11.

IV. Faith fills the soul with that admirable contentment which St. Paul wished to the Romans when he said: "May the God of hope fill you with *peace and joy in your faith.*[1]" What St. Paul wished to the Romans, St. Peter promises to all the faithful: *If you believe* as you ought *your hearts will exult with joy unspeakable and glorified: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*[2] By these last words, the Apostle discovers to us the source whence flow these joys upon the soul; it is that it sees itself in the right path which infallibly leads to beatitude.

V. Finally, the glory and love of Our Lord ought powerfully to excite us to the practice of these acts of faith; for by each act we honor Him and render Him great glory founded on the high esteem we have of His wisdom and truth, which makes us believe all He says. Of Abraham, the father of the faithful, St. Paul expressly says: *He was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God.*[3] Let us then render to God with a good heart this glory of which He is so worthy, and let us do this the more ardently, as we can honor him thus only in this life, for in heaven there shall be no more faith; there we shall taste its precious fruit, the clear vision of God. Besides, if we love Him we shall be greatly attracted to this exercise, for one of the greatest proofs of love we can give Him is to believe simply what He says, because this is to prove in the most evident manner the esteem we have of him. If some person asked me to believe for his sake that the sun is luminous, I do not think he would be greatly indebted to me for believing it, since my eyes deprive me of the power of doubting it; but if he wished me to believe that it is not luminous, I should testify great affection for him if on his word I admitted as true what my reason and will prove to be false, and I should give him the most signal tokens of the entire reliance I placed on his opinion, his judgment, the per-

[1] I. Rom. xv. 13. [2] I. Peter i. 8. [3] Rom. iv. 20.

fection of his sight. We, therefore, testify great love for God by believing simply, and like children, all the mysteries of faith, in which our reason is lost, and which our eyes not only see not, but often seem to see the contrary. Thus St. Paul says : *Charity believeth all things.* The ancients represented love with bandaged eyes, to show, among other things, that the lover receives without questioning and without distrust, all the beloved says, because of the excellent opinion he has conceived of her intellect, and her virtue, and because he is persuaded that she knows well what she says, and that she would not deceive him.

VI. As regards temptations against faith with which many are troubled, we will say by way of conclusion that if they are very painful they are not very dangerous, for the pain they cause is a certain mark that they are resisted ; and is very meritorious, being a seed of future glory. The soul thus troubled must be consoled and take courage in the combat : *You shall greatly rejoice,* says St. Peter, *if now you must be for a little time made sorrowful in divers temptations : that the trial of your faith (much more precious than gold which is tried by the fire) may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*[1]

St. Louis, related to Joinville, from whom we take the account, that a certain doctor being extremely tormented by thoughts against faith, and especially against the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, went to open his mind to the Bishop, who consoled him and inquired whether he ever took pleasure in these thoughts ; the Doctor replied in the negative. "But would you consent for all the gold in the world to renounce your faith in the Eucharist or any other Sacrament?" "No, though I should be torn from limb to limb I would not consent to even a thought against these mysteries." The Bishop then

[1] I. Peter i. 6.

showed him the great treasure of merits he should amass by supporting the trouble these cruel temptations caused him, and the better to make him comprehend it, he used the following comparison! "You know war is raging between France and England, and you are not ignorant that the place most exposed to danger is the city of Rochelle, on the confines of the two kingdoms. If the king should make you governor of Rochelle, and give to me the government of Montlhéry, which is in the heart of the kingdom, to which of us would he have more reason to be obliged on the successful termination of the war?" "To me, surely," replied the Doctor. "You are right," said the Bishop: "well, my heart is like Montlhéry, because of the perfect assurance it has of the mysteries of faith, against which I have never had any temptations: yours is like Rochelle, it is well attacked but it is also well defended. God will give you a double recompense, because in the most violent assaults you defend your heart for Him, and fight manfully against His enemies."

VII. The remedy against these temptations is to remember that God is omnipotent, and that the most dazzling of his works which overpower our weak intellects, are but the work of three of His fingers. When the Holy Virgin formed this reasonable doubt, how she could become a mother and preserve her virginity, the Angel immediately spoke to her of the power of God, with whom nothing is impossible; she then submitted immediately, declaring herself ready to obey. Another remedy is to make the contrary acts; if you are tempted regarding the Real Presence, and so of other mysteries, say: Far be it, from me, to consent to this unfortunate thought that the eucharistic species is only bread, that Our Lord is there only in figure; I firmly believe that He is present in this mystery, in Soul and in Body, and I desire to live and die in this belief. I am ready to lay down my life in defense of this truth.

Another excellent remedy against these temptations is to humble ourselves interiorly, and never dispute with the demon, for as he is extremely cunning, and has far more knowledge than we, he could easily, if God deprived us of His ordinary succors, embroil our minds by his specious reasoning and sophisms, and thus deceive us. The holy Bishop of Geneva, finding himself reduced to extremity in one of his illnesses, was grievously assailed by the demon with temptations against the Real Presence; while his body sought to resist the violence of the disease, it seemed to him that the spirit of lying suggested against this truth arguments more powerful than he had ever before heard urged against it. After his recovery he said that he surmounted this temptation, not by arguing with the devil, but by invoking in the depth of his heart the sacred Name of Jesus, which drives away all the infernal powers. We are not clever enough to argue with the devil, his weapons are tempered differently from ours, he knows how to aim hidden strokes which it is very difficult to parry; we must use artifice with him, humbling ourselves to vanquish him, and replying thus to his arguments. It is not for me to argue these matters; this has been done by Doctors of the Church inspired by God; my business is to believe and adore. I am ignorant and stolid, but these Doctors are the mind and the tongue of the mystic body of Our Lord, they were appointed to instruct and guide me, and I ought to submit to their teachings. Should he who experiences temptation be a Doctor himself, he can follow the same counsel, because besides the obscurity that ordinarily envelopes the mysteries of faith, temptation can cast so thick a cloud over his understanding, so confound his faculties that, besieged and enveloped with darkness, he can see nothing, and it will be impossible for him to avail himself of his erudition. As physicians when ill do not prescribe for themselves, but confide them-

selves to others for the treatment of their maladies, theologians will have to recur to others for light and direction, as did the theologian of whom we have already spoken; or, let him humble himself before God, and believe simply and like a child the mystery against which he is tempted, and then try to think of something else. If the temptation becomes very importunate, especially if it be of the class of those which tempt to despair of salvation, it is best to have recourse to love, saying: Despite of all the suggestions of the evil one, I will, through the love I have for my Lord Jesus, live and die in the faith of the Holy Catholic Church, come what may, and through His grace nothing will ever be able to alter my resolution of being faithful to Him unto death.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LOVE OF OUR LORD MAKES US PRACTICE HOPE.

I. It is a very sweet virtue.—II. Its nature.—III. It should be unshaken.—IV. It should contemn human succors.—V. Rejoice when they fail.—VI. Examples.—VII. Means of attaining this degree.

I. *Charity hopeth all things*,[1] says St. Paul. The triumph of love is hope. It seems to me that, in beginning to treat of this subject, my heart dilates, and experiences a new sentiment of joy. Is any virtue more sweet, more agreeable or better calculated to replenish the heart with the purest consolation? It is the most powerful sweetener of the bitterness of this life, the greatest solace of our pains, the most healing balm which can be applied to our wounded hearts. The unhappy are sustained under their miseries by the hope of being freed from them, otherwise nothing could arrest their despair; what renders hell the

[1] I. Cor. xiii. 7.

most intolerable of all evils, is, that hope never enters it. The gods, say the ancients, placed poverty, sadness, maladies and all other evils in Pandora's box, but they put hope in the bottom, as the only remedy of every evil. Hope has been given to men, says the Jew Philo, to be as a domestic consolation in all their adversities. Let us speak then of this sweet virtue, beginning with its nature and qualities.

II. Hope is the second theological virtue ; it inclines our will to expect of God all the goods of which we have need. But to place this in a clearer point of view, we must recall to mind what has been said in speaking of faith, that every virtue has two objects on which its nature is founded ; the material object, that is, the matter on which it is exercised, and the formal object, that is, the motive through which it is exercised. The material object of hope is, all the goods we can expect of God, temporal and eternal, goods of body and soul, of nature and grace, and glory : the formal object is the power and goodness of God, His fidelity to His promises, and the merits of Jesus Christ. Let us elucidate this by an illustration: a sick man hopes to recover health by means of his physician, because he knows that this physician can and will cure him. You do not expect ten thousand crowns from a poor friend, nor from the king, with whom you have not the honor of being acquainted ; because if your friend would do it he cannot, and if the king could do it he would not : the defect of will in the king and of power in your friend, hinder you from expecting this sum from one or the other. The will and the power—behold the two pillars on which hope leans, the two wings with which it flies to the desired object. Besides these, there are other motives for hope in God ; the infallible certitude His promises give us, the infinite merits of His Son Our Lord, in consideration of which we can obtain the object of our petitions, but there

must be also good life on the part of the petitioner, that his hope may be just and its object legitimate ; or, at least, if he be in a state of sin, he must have a determined will to rise out of it : such is the nature of hope. There are two sorts of hope, as of faith : the one is common to all the faithful, and is lost only by despair ; the other is extraordinary and heroic, and is found but in few persons. We ought to labor to acquire the latter, since by the grace of God we possess the former. The Royal Prophet alludes to this hope when he says : *In thy word I have very much hoped.*[1] It is called *fiducia,* confidence. Thus Seneca writes to his friend Lucilius : "I have great hope in you, but I have not yet that confidence which excludes all fear."

III. The first quality of hope is firmness ; it must be stable and constant to such a degree, that nothing in the world can, I will not say overthrow it, but even shake it. Like a rock in the midst of the sea which shows its firmness in a calm, but still more in a storm, for then it appears truly immoveable, since wind and wave beat against it with all their fury, and yet cannot detach it from its base, or even agitate it : *His heart is pure,* says David. speaking of the man who hopes, *because he confides in the Lord, his heart is confirmed in hope, he shall not be moved,*[2] whatever may happen to him.

IV. The second quality of hope is still more perfect ; it excites man to make small account of the succors of creatures ; whether their source is in himself, his mind, his judgment, his knowledge, his address, his riches, his credit, his friends and all that he has ; or that feeling and knowing the vanity of all human succors, he regards them as they really are, and as St. Teresa called them with great truth, like the withered stem of a juniper tree which breaks when one leans on it. It is with these eyes, and by the aid of

[1] Ps. cxviii. 147. [2] Ps. cxi. 7.

the divine torch of hope in God, that it regards all the succors of the great, of riches, friends and all the helps which creatures can offer ; not that it ought not to use them, it must do so, God wills it, and has so disposed things here below, but they must be used solely because God ordains it, nor should they be considered as the sustenance of our hope, but only as means the success of which depends on God's blessing.

V. The third degree of hope is still more elevated ; by it hope attains its highest possible perfection : it consists in rejoicing at the absence of human succors, being glad when parents, friends and relatives, and all creatures abandon us, or are unwilling or unable to aid us. The soul thus abandoned, ought, in this universal abandonment, to raise up her heart and dilate it in God, in proportion as she has little to expect of creatures : when thus forsaken her hope should become stronger, and lean with more resolution on the power of the Omnipotent. We must act in the same manner in tribulations and aridities. When it seems to us that we are abandoned by God, that we have neither taste nor sentiment of His presence, when we are overwhelmed with doubts of our salvation, then must we strive as much as possible in the midst of these desolations to rejoice, to console ourselves by vivifying more and more our confidence in God, and rendering Him greater glory by this means so painful to us. Such is the heroic hope of Saints and great souls.

VI. Thus the holy man, Job, after having lost his goods, his honors, his children ; his body being covered with horrible ulcers, himself persecuted by his wife and friends, seated on a dung-hill, and employed in scraping corruption from his wounds with a broken potsherd, uttered these admirable words : *Though God should slay me, yet will I trust in Him, and He Himself will be my Saviour.*[1]

[1] Job xiii. 15, 16.

Thus the holy Patriarch Abraham, when God commanded him to sacrifice his son Isaac, through whom he had promised to make him the father of a great nation, and a progenitor of the Messiah, *hoped against hope*, says St. Paul, *and did not yield to the slightest diffidence in God's promise.*[1] The chaste Susanna, seeing her innocence assailed by the two infamous old men who had sought to rob her of her honor, lifted up her eyes, to heaven, weeping, for her heart was *full of confidence in the Lord.*[2] Sulpicius Severus relates that St. Martin, having been seized by robbers, was about to be put to death ; one of them even held the axe over his head, when another, urged interiorly, arrested the murderer's arm ; the Saint thus rescued was asked by his deliverer what his sentiments had been in this cruel conjuncture. "Never in my life have I been more tranquil," was the reply ; "my hope was in God, who is never far from those who trust in Him, in proportion as they have little to expect from creatures." What shall we say of St. Francis Xavier, what words can describe his heroic confidence in God, which wrought the admirable wonders in the Indies that have rendered his name so illustrious in the Church ? I shall speak only of that which he displayed in going to the isle of Moro. No sooner did his intention of carrying the faith there become known, than he was vigorously and universally opposed ; his friends represented to him, that to land on that island was almost certain death. His being under the protection of the Portuguese would avail him nothing, for the Portuguese never went there either for traffic or to purchase provisions ; the soil was so barren as to be more suitable for wild beasts than for human beings. But there were still greater disadvantages added to the list. What was to be hoped from men who devoured their fellow men, from men whose only study was to prepare poison, and whose only dis-

[1] Rom. iv. 18, 20. [2] Dan. xiii. 35.

course was treachery? But the Saint was not to be deterred. He replied that God would give him aid proportioned to the exigencies of the case. And since the barbarity of this people hindered others from attempting to improve them, it became all the more imperative on him to undertake the task. He reminded his friends that if the island of Moro abounded with aromatic groves, mountains of gold and rivers of pearls, Christians would at all risks contrive to travel thither, and then indignantly asked whether the charity of the Son of God should give less courage than the avarice of the children of men? The Saint tore himself from the embraces of his children at Ternate, and disregarding their entreaties, embarked for Moro, and so consoling did his mission there prove to him that he used to say that Moro ought to be called the *Island of Confidence in God*. When about to leave Goa for Malacca, the same Saint wrote as follows to St. Ignatius: "If I find not a Portuguese vessel bound for Malacca, I will embark in some pagan or Saracen frigate, and such is my confidence in God, for whose love alone I undertake this voyage, that if I saw a little skiff about to start I would defy all the storms of the ocean with the breath of the Holy Spirit, for my whole hope is in God, and not in the sails and cordages of a merchantman."

VII. There are two ways of arriving at this high degree of hope, which, after the grace of God, may be regarded as two roots of heroic confidence; the first is entire diffidence in our own strength, founded on the knowledge of our own nothingness, of our sins, and sustained by a lively faith in this truth: the second is firm reliance on the infinite power of God, His sovereign goodness, His immense liberality, His fidelity in fulfilling His promises, and on the infinite merits of Our Lord, the least of which is precious beyond all price, and when applied gives us the right to obtain all we can ask: hence Jesus Christ Himself gives

us such strong assurances of this when He says in the Gospel of St. John : *Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the father anything in My Name it will be given you.*[1] On these two principles is founded victorious hope, on these two bases it leans, saying with the Apostle : *I can do all things*, not by myself who am nothing, not by men, even though they may be very powerful and well affected towards me, nor yet by angels, because a stronger power than theirs could hinder the effects of their good will towards me, but *in God who strengthens me*,[2] and whose arm nothing can resist. In this heroic hope the soul sings with the Royal Prophet : *The Lord is with me, I shall not fear : what can man do against me? The Lord is with me. I shall despise my enemies. The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life*, who shall make me tremble ? *Though I should walk in the midst of the shades of death*, though whole armies were ranged in battle against me, *I shall feel no evil, because Thou art with me.*[3] Behold how high this confidence reaches ; the more firmly these two principles are rooted in the soul, the more unshaken is our hope and the more capable it is of producing great effects ; if we are striving to lead a good life, we must never be afraid that we can have too much confidence, for as God, by reason of His infinite veracity merits a belief in some sort infinite, so by reason of His power, His goodness, the infallibility of His promises, perfections which are not less infinite than His veracity, He merits confidence in some manner infinite, and so pleasing is this confidence to Him that it gains all it asks or desires of Him.

[1] John xvi. 23. [2] Phil. iv. 13. [3] Ps. cxvii. 6, xxvi. 1, ibid. 4.

SECTION I.

OBJECTS OF HOPE.

I. Our corporal wants.—II Our imperfections.—III. The pardon of our sins.—IV. Our predestination.

Hope has for its object all the goods we can receive of God, and deliverance from all the evils with which we can be afflicted. There are two sorts of goods, and two sorts of evils: the former regards this temporal life, and the latter eternal life; the first are natural goods and evils of body and soul; the second are sin and eternal damnation, its consequence, the goods of grace, glory, and in general all that regards our salvation. We ought to hope firmly that God will deliver us from all these evils, and communicate to us all these goods in abundance.

I. We say, first, that we ought to expect from the goodness and paternal Providence of God all that is necessary for us in this life—food, clothing, lodging, and all that is essential to our conservation, *for your heavenly Father knoweth you have need of these things*,[1] said Our Lord. And, indeed, if He cares for the birds who know Him not, for men who ignore Him, who blaspheme His Holy Name, overthrow His altars, persecute His servants, He will not forget those who love Him and keep His holy laws, but rather will He provide them with all that is requisite. A poor villager, however rough he may be, does not suffer the beast who serves him to die of hunger; he feeds him every day and leads him to pasture; and can God, whose goodness, riches and wisdom are infinite, forsake or leave to perish, a person who serves Him and procures His glory? The Spouse says, speaking of her Beloved: "*His left hand is under my head, and His right hand shall embrace*

[1] Matth. vi. 32.

me.[1] By the left hand she understands temporal goods, and by the right, eternal goods ; she wishes to say that Our Lord gives both, with this difference, however, that He gives the goods of this life with the left hand as being the less, and those of the other with His right hand as being the greater. "His left hand is under my head," says St. Austin, "to show that He forsakes me not in my temporal necessities, but it is *under* my head, not over it, for it is the right hand that embraces me to promise and bestow eternal life." God then will certainly bestow on us all that shall be necessary to us ; we may expect it confidently, and we should ask it in this spirit. If sometimes he permits us to suffer, if he deprives us of our health, wealth and friends, this commonly arises from one of two causes : first, because we are too much attached to them, we seek them with passion, we do not keep them under our head, like the Spouse, but above it, that is, we prefer them to spiritual goods, we put the accessories before the principal ; the great ardor with which we seek them deprives us of them, the too great eagerness of will with which we desire them takes from Our Lord the will to bestow them. He Himself has marked the order we should observe : Seek first the kingdom of God, says He, seek eternal goods, *and all other things will be added unto you*, temporalites will never fail you. The second cause is, that God, who discovers by the lights of His foreknowledge all that will hereafter happen, knows that these goods might injure the just, and that the deprivation of them would be more conducive to his eternal salvation than the enjoyment of them. As He is infinitely good and merciful, He does not take pleasure in seeing men, especially the just, in trouble ; they are His dear friends, His chosen children ; we ought then feel convinced that the losses, griefs and afflictions He sends them please him not,

[1] Cant. ii. 6.

inasmuch as they are painful to them, but only insomuch as they dispose them for the possession of the greatest goods, and of eternal life.

II. Our confidence must not give way under imperfections, vicious inclinations, bad habits, defective actions, etc., which are not sins, because the will has no part in them, and which torment not only sinners but also the just, and cause many to lose the cheerfulness necessary to the service of God, and the courage with which they should press onward—these imperfections which weary the mind and sadden the heart, when we reflect that notwithstanding our good resolutions, and the length of time we have been ardently striving to lead a spiritual life, we are still subject to the same defects, and have scarcely any hope of ridding ourselves of them. We must then reanimate our confidence, and hope with our whole hearts in the mercy of our God, who will powerfully assist us, and by His grace free us from these teasing imperfections, provided we are vigilant and earnest in our efforts to surmount them. Nature is corrupt, frailty is very great, but still greater are the remedies. Our Lord, who has in Himself deified our nature, can sanctify the just who co-operate with His graces : the Apostles were ignorant, coarse and imperfect. He rendered them learned holy and perfect. He is powerful enough to heal our evils, to fortify our weakness and to purify us of our stains ; every day He renders the proud humble, the angry patient, the vindictive forgiving, the envious charitable. He imprints sentiments of virtue on those who heretofore had no taste but for crime : can He not also exercise the same bounty towards us, if only we do the little He requires of us ? It is hope which prepares our hearts for all His powers. *Those who hope in the Lord shall change their strength,* says Isaiah, *they shall take wing and fly like the eagle ; they shall run and not become weary* in the career of virtue ; *they shall march*

therein and faint not, because God who, as the same Prophet had already said, created the universe out of nothing, and by a single word gave being and perfection to all that we see, *sustains those who are weary*, and replenishes with vigor and strength *those who are weak*. These words are so consoling that the Hebrews often repeated them, and even put them at the ends of their books, but by abbreviation only, according to their custom, using but the initials of the words.

Our Lord says of Himself, by the mouth of Ezekiel : *As the good Shepherd I will pasture My sheep. I will seek those who were lost. I will raise up the fallen. I will bind the wounds of the wounded. I will strengthen the weak.* To prove the meekness of Jesus Christ, St. Matthew uses these lovely words of Isaiah : "The bruised reed He shall not break and the smoking flax He shall not extinguish." By these he wished to show that the mercy and goodness of Jesus Christ are so great that He will not despise infirm souls, void and light as the reed, that He will not abandon those who have some smoke, that is, some commencement of virtue, but He will fortify these reeds and render them firm as pillars ; He will kindle up this smoking flax into a great fire, by perfecting that which is already begun. Effects proved this, because He rebuked not those who came to Him for a remedy in their miseries, though they were sullied with many defects, and mingled much imperfection with the good movements that brought them to Him. He rejected not their demands because of these defects, nor did He even defer their cure till to-morrow, but He received them with incomparable goodness and sweetness, heard them, consoled them and granted their petitions, perfecting in them whatever was defective. Let us hope that with the same bounty, and even sweetness, regarding us with the same eyes of mercy and compassion, He will strengthen us in our weakness, dissipate our darkness,

warm our hearts, augment the feeble flames of our love, and, by His grace, render us victorious over all that now afflicts us. Let us beware of leaning on ourselves, nor let us be saddened by the view of our poverty. We ought to avoid tepid, languishing desires which keep the soul in weakness, and hinder its advancement ; but we should also avoid those eager, precipitate desires which make us sigh, without rule or measure, after perfection. Perfection is the last step of the ladder, as God was found at the top of Jacob's ladder ; it is to be reached by steps : the body does not acquire its whole bulk the moment it is formed, it increases little by little—souls do not acquire perfection all at once, but only by degrees.

III. Our hope ought to extend to all our sins ; however great or enormous they may be, we must have confidence that He will pardon us, provided we ask Him, and put ourselves in a state to receive forgiveness. We should greatly outrage Him and grievously offend Him, did we despair of pardon, for this would be to think that His mercy is less than our sins, though it is absolutely infinite, and though our sins, and all possible sins, are before it only as a straw before a great fire, as St. Chrysostom observes. Besides, Jesus Christ came on earth to obtain pardon for us. He clothed Himself with our nature to pay our debts. He is our mediator to reconcile us with the Father. *We are reconciled to God by the death of His Son,* says St. Paul. His Blood unites that which was divided ; His sufferings have satisfied superabundantly for all our debts. What can be more merciful or more capable of reanimating our confidence! cries out St. Austin. The sinner was condemned to eternal pains. He could not pay his ransom. God said to him, Take my only Son to pay thy debt : the Son Himself said, I give Myself to thee, that thou mayst offer Me for thy ransom. I make thee master of all My riches and merits, use them freely to procure thy libera-

tion. Is it then astonishing that He who gives these treasures, which are infinitely greater than the debt, should forgive the sins of him to whom He gives them? Hence St. Paul calls Our Lord *our hope*, and St. Ignatius, the martyr, calls Him our perfect and consummated hope. When, then, you shall have the misfortune to sin, and thus enkindle against yourself the flames of God's anger have recourse to this means, "save yourself in this isle." Enter into the *holes* of the rock and the hollow places of the wall, says Isaiah, to hide yourself from the anger of the Lord. The great Albuquerque, seeing himself on the point of being shipwrecked in the Arabian Sea, held up a child between heaven and himself, that the sight of this innocent being might propitiate God: do you oppose in like manner this dear Son, with all the labors of His life and death, to the anger of God, and use him as an impenetrable shield to defend yourself from the arrows of His vengeance.

Moreover, has not Our Lord given us powerful motives to hope for the pardon of our sins by the manner in which, while on earth, He acted with sinners. How diligently he sought them! How sweetly and graciously He received them! how amiably He spoke to them! how tenderly He cherished them! how mercifully He pardoned their sins! See Zaccheus, the woman taken in adultery, Magdalen and others. It is on this goodness and sweetness we must cast our eyes when we shall have sinned, for, as St. Bernard says, many persons are hindered from returning to God by figuring to themselves that they have to deal with a terrible, implacable master: this error is greatly opposed to His infinite mercy, and the ineffable tenderness of His noble Heart. To destroy it, St. Paul gives himself for an example in his first epistle to Timothy, wherein, after having confessed that he had been a blasphemer and a persecutor of Jesus Christ, who nevertheless had mercy on him, he adds: "A faithful saying, and

worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief. But for this cause have I obtained mercy : that in me first Christ Jesus might show forth all patience for the information of them that shall believe in Him unto life everlasting." On this text Theodoret wisely says : "When a physician has many hopeless cases, if by his care and his prescriptions he restores the worst of them to health, all the others cease to despair of their recovery, and even begin to regard it as certain ; even so, Our Lord, the true physician of our souls, having perfectly cured St Paul, having closed all his wounds, having endowed him with so many graces and raised him to such high perfection, invites all other sinners to have recourse to him, and however great their sins, to expect mercy and pardon from Him who changed Saul the persecutor into Paul the Apostle.

IV. The fourth matter on which hope should be exercised is our predestination ; we must hope that we shall be of the number of the elect, that God will certainly save us. This hope in some souls becomes so great and so strong, that it often destroys nearly all their anxieties about their salvation ; it dissipates all their doubts and disquietude about their predestination, it replenishes them with a solid repose on this point, and makes them live in an expectation of beatitude which almost amounts to certainty. Not, as the Scriptures and Fathers say, and as the Council of Trent has decided, that any one, however high his perfections may be, can, without a special revelation, be perfectly certain of salvation, as he is of the mysteries of faith, for the only certitude he can have is moral certitude, founded on two principles : the first is the goodness, power and promises of God, this principle is infallible ; but the second, which is a good life and fidelity to grace, being doubtful, it follows that it can never be a point of certitude as great as the truths of faith and natural

truth ; hence the certainty of which we speak being founded on these two principles may be very great, but cannot be infallible, being partially dependent on ourselves.

Now the sources of this assurance of salvation, the lights which morally show us our predestination, and presage our future bliss are : a great hatred of all sin, even the smallest, a firm and constant resolution never to offend God, true humility of heart, detachment from creatures, patience and resignation under afflictions, cordial charity towards our neighbor, a special devotion to Mary, a sincere and ardent love for Our Lord, and in general the assistance and presence of the Holy Ghost in the heart, who makes Himself felt therein by His operations. You have not received the spirit of bondage again, in fear, wrote St. Paul, but a spirit of love, *the spirit of adoption*, whereby we cry, Abba, Father ; so that by the movement and inspiration of this spirit, we cry to God, not so much with the mouth as with the heart, not so much with the tongue as with the mind, full of love and filial confidence, Abba, Father, like little children who, by a natural instinct, recognize their father, embrace him tenderly and call him their father with a freedom which servants would not dare to assume, because they are not his children. For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, continues the Apostle, that we are the sons of God, and if sons, heirs also—heirs indeed of God and *joint heirs with Christ*. What riches ! what glory ! how consoling for the servants of God to have in this life such great and firm hope of their salvation as to free them from all the diffidence which wearies servile souls ! It delivers them from excessive apprehension of damnation, it preserves them in peace and tranquillity, it consoles and rejoices them. The riches of kings and the splendor of their diadems are but misery and nothingness when compared with this sweet confidence, as St. Bernard well observes.

SECTION II.

PRACTICE OF HOPE.

I. Manner of practising hope.—II. In what circumstances it ought to be practised.

I. To practice hope well the soul should retire to the secret of her heart to consider the Divine Majesty with all His perfections, especially those on which hope is founded, viz., His omnipotence, His goodness, His love, His fidelity to His promises, the efficaciousness of the merits of His Son : His power is so great that out of nothing, and by His word only, He created the universe, and He could with equal facility produce millions of still more beautiful worlds, all the strength of men, demons and all creatures, all the bad will which they could use to hinder our salvation, doubled and trebled a thousand times at each moment during all eternity, all our inherent weakness, poverty and misery, our little disposition to virtue, though they be multiplied by millions and billions, are before the infinite power of God, only as a feather, which the least gust of wind blows away. God can in an instant raise our frailty above the strength of our enemies, and cause their strength to be vanished by our weakness, since angels, men, demons, and all possible creatures have not before God the strength of a gnat, because all creatures are essentially nothing, and have being and power only inasmuch as God bestows and preserves them. The soul must reflect that the love God bears her is so great that all the love of father, mother, relations and friends, though increased a million times, is only coldness and the shadow of love compared with His love. She must be persuaded that the fidelity of God to His promises is infallible, that He should cease to exist if He failed to keep His word ; in

fine, that the merits of Our Lord Jesus, because of their infinite value, have power to obtain all things of God, His Almighty Father.

We should make great acts of faith in all these truths, and imprint them on our hearts so firmly as to exclude all doubt, remembering this truth so often repeated in the Holy Scripture, that he who hopes in God shall never be confounded. Know, says the Sage, that all who hope in the Lord are *never confounded*. Hope confoundeth not, says St. Paul. All those who hope in Thee, says David, *shall not be deceived in their expectation;* hence he said a little before: "To Thee have I lifted up my soul, O Lord; in Thee, my God, I put my confidence. I shall never be put to shame."

Moreover, the soul must be persuaded that God ardently desires that we should have this sweet idea of Him, that He deems it a great honor that we should consider Him thus, that He desires we should repose entirely on Him, that we should always demand of him great things for ourselves and for our neighbors, with an infallible certainty of obtaining them, if they be conducive to His glory and our salvation; and that we shall never be able to have in Him all the confidence He merits and desires of us.

II. When the understanding shall have been illumined with these divine lights, the will, eager to glorify God by the virtue of hope, must produce its acts with all possible perfection, especially by reciting the *Lord's Prayer*, in which are included the principal objects of our hope, and by vivifying all our prayers with a lively confidence that we shall obtain whatever we ask. *Let a man ask with faith*, says St. James, *nothing wavering*. Our prayers are ordinarily ineffectual, because we are wanting in this confidence; while the prayers of the Saints were omnipotent, because they were animated with it; hence God, when He wished to punish sinners, told the Saints not to impede Him by their

prayers in the execution of His design. Thus He warned Moses to desist, saying, *Let me alone;* because prayers full of confidence cause the arms to fall from His hands. It is, then, very advantageous before, and even after, our prayers to form acts of heroic confidence in God, believing that we shall certainly obtain what we ask, if it be expedient for us: we should even, after the example of the Saints, be as sure of it as if we had already received it. *Lord,* said the Royal Prophet, *let Thy mercies be upon us,* distribute Thy gifts to us, *according to our hope in Thee;* that is, as Theodoret explains, according to the greatness of our hope in Thee, that our hopes may be the measure of Thy liberality: regulate according to it Thy acquiescence in our demands. We must ask of God great things for ourselves and for others, because they cost Him no more than little things, and, besides, the greater the things we ask, the higher become our ideas of His goodness and power. We can ask Him, for instance, to make us very noble instruments of His glory in this life and in the next, to give us grace to do great things for His service, to give us deep humility, founded on our knowledge of His greatness and our nothingness, heroic patience to bear up under our afflictions, unutterable meekness to support injuries tranquilly, perfect submission of will and judgment to our superiors, a great spirit of prayer, but of that kind of prayer which will render us better, more mortified, more detached from creatures; above all, an ardent love for God and our neighbor; that he would make us die to the movements of corrupt nature, and be most submissive to those of His grace. Let us tell Him, as we make each petition, that we expect this favor of His goodness, and though He may not accord us the high degree of virtue we ask, because this might not be what His Providence has designed for us, our confidence will, nevertheless, oblige Him to give with greater abundance than He had otherwise done.

Having made the acts of faith on the four last things, as has been already recommended, we should add acts of hope. After the act of faith on death, which may run thus: I firmly believe that I shall die; we should say, I hope also, O God, omnipotent and merciful, that by the merits of Thy holy death Thou wilt give me grace to die well, and to enter through death's portals into the beatitude Thou hast prepared for me. I believe that I shall be summoned before Thy tribunal to render an account of my life. I hope, through Thy mercy, to obtain a favorable sentence. I believe in the glory of heaven, and I hope one day to possess it, that I may, for all eternity with the elect, praise, thank and glorify Thee. I believe in hell, and I hope, through Thy goodness, to be preserved from it, and from sin which leads to it.

After the act of faith in the Providence of God, we may say: I hope in Divine Providence, I have full confidence that God will watch over me with maternal solicitude, as regards my body and my soul, in health, in sickness, in life, in death, in time and in eternity. Yes; *this my hope is laid up in my bosom*, I am certain that God will arrange all for His greater glory and my greater good. The Lord ruleth me, I shall want for nothing. My mind is in perfect repose. I receive with submission and respect present events, and I look forward tranquilly to the future.

For the pardon of our sins, we may say: Though the excessive number and enormity of my sins render me wholly unworthy of forgiveness, yet when I cast my eyes on the abyss of Thy goodness and mercy, O God, all powerful and all merciful, I hope for pardon. And when I see Thee dying on the cross, and shedding with so much love every drop of Thy Precious Blood for my salvation, how can I despair? Thou hast pardoned publicans, abandoned sinners, thieves, unfaithful friends. Thou didst receive with open arms the prodigal child, and wilt Thou not also par-

don me? Hast Thou not invited me Thyself, O my Saviour, to hope for pardon through Thy goodness and mercy? Therefore do I hope in Thee, my God.

For salvation and final perseverance; I hope, my sweet and merciful Savior, that though I am entirely undeserving of it, Thou wilt, nevertheless, grant me this signal favor, worthy of thy liberality and magnificence, of living and dying in Thy grace, and being placed in the number of Thy elect. So firm is my hope of being saved, through Thy goodness, that it seems to me already that I am saved. Thou hast sent into my heart the spirit of adoption whereby we cry: *Abba, Father,* and which makes me regard as secure the inheritance Thy Son hath acquired for me with His Most Precious Blood.

Remark that these great acts of confidence on predestination and on assurance of salvation ought always be accompanied by filial fear, which, far from injuring them, gives them more ardor and force; a good son can fear to be disenherited and driven from the presence of his father, without, however, experiencing inquietude, because he is a good son, obedient to the commands of his father, and wishes to remain so. It is on this good will, next to the mercy and grace of God, that our confidence ought to lean. Offer to God a sacrifice of justice, says the Psalmist, and confide in the Lord; that is to say, according to the interpretation of St. Austin, lead a just and virtuous life, practice good works, and hope in the Lord, and your hope will be well founded. Elsewhere David says: "Hope in the Lord, and do good, and inherit the land."

We may sometimes regard ourselves as abandoned, or even persecuted, by all men, without having anything to expect from them, like Job, St. Martin, Pope, St. Francis Xavier, etc.; and then produce, after their example, heroic acts of great confidence in God. Though we be not really in these terrible occasions, and that we pass through them

only in imagination, and that by consequence the acts of confidence cannot be nearly so difficult, yet these acts will help us very much when we shall be in occasions of performing them. If we practice army tactics at tournaments we shall be able to combat the more skillfully on the field.

Yet more, to habituate ourselves to form these acts of hope, and to arm ourselves against temptation to despair, it will be very useful to become familiar with texts of Scripture which have reference to this virtue, and above all with the Psalms, which are full of it. St. Gregory, of Nyssa, relates that the great Saint Ephrem had nearly always in his mouth these words : " My heart hath hoped in the Lord, and I am succored. For mercy shall encompass him who hopeth in the Lord." You may use the following, also : Thou hast drawn me from my mother's womb ; Thou wast my hope from my mother's breast. Depart not from me. Save those who hope in Thee. Preserve me as the apple of Thine eye. Protect me under the shadow of Thy wings. Why art Thou troubled, O my soul, and why dost thou disturb me ? I have put all my confidence in Thy promises. Thou alone art my refuge and my shield ; I have hoped only in thy word ; that is, according to the explanation of St. Ambrose, in Thy Incarnate Son, Christ Jesus.

Lord God of hosts, blessed is the man that hopeth in Thee ! It is good to confide in the Lord more than to confide in man ; it is good to hope in the Lord more than in the princes of the earth ; and, as Jeremiah says : " Cursed is the man who confides in man, who leans on an arm of flesh, and whose heart recedes from the Lord. For he shall be like the tamaric in the desert, and he shall not see when good shall come, but he shall dwell in a salt land, and not inhabited ;" then he adds, " Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his

confidence. He shall be as a tree which is planted by the waters, which spreadeth out its roots towards the moisture, and shall not fear when the great heat cometh. And the leaf thereof shall be green, and in the time of drought it shall not be solicitous, neither shall it cease at any time to bring forth fruit." We will add here these remarkable words which Rabsasces, captain-general of the army of Sennacherib, King of Assyria, said to King Ezechias when he besieged the city of Jerusalem, and which we may apply to all who confide in creatures : "You are deceived. You trust in Egypt a staff of a broken reed, upon which if a man lean it will go into his hand and pierce it."

SECTION III.

CONCLUSION.

I. Reasons to excite us to the practice of hope.—II. Our own weakness.—III. Merit of hope.—IV. It replenishes the soul with assurance and joy.—V. It gives strength.—VI. It obtains all things of God.—VII. It also procures Him great glory.

I. Since this is so, let us place all our hope in God, let us make acts of hope often and with all possible perfection : "If we relish these truths," says St. Bernard, "why do we defer to withdraw our heart from the vain, miserable hopes we have rested on creatures, and to attach ourselves wholly to the one solid and perfect hope, which is the source of all good?" If there be any thing impossible or even difficult to God, then indeed you may look for some other support. But God can do all things ; He has only to speak the word. "Let us remain firm and unshaken in the profession of our hope," says St. Paul, "since He who has promised is faithful to His promises." St. Thomas wisely says that what ought to excite us to confide in God is, that He invites us to do so, with such urgent words

and such frequency in the Holy Scripture, that, as St. Gregory remarks, it has no other object in view but to fortify us in present sufferings by the hope of future goods. Our Lord would not so often warn us to lean on Him unless He wished to sustain us. God is not a deceiver. He does not present Himself as our protection to succor us, in order to abandon us when we approach Him with confidence in His goodness.

II. Besides the exhortations God gives us in the Scriptures, there are many other reasons which should induce us to confide in Him, and first, our weakness, which is so great that of ourselves we can do nothing, the last breath is able to overthrow us, the weakest enemies to vanquish us: we must then seek strength outside of ourselves. We cannot find it in creatures, which are only nothingness like ourselves; we must then seek it in God, who is omnipotent; from Him we must expect everything. *Hope in the Lord* forevermore, in the Lord God mighty forever,[1] says Isaiah. Children who are unable to walk or even to stand upright, learn from nature to lean on something able to sustain them, otherwise their fall would be inevitable. "Man, who is endowed with reason," says St. Thomas, using the same comparison, "ought to do what comes natural to a child, attach himself strongly to God, and lean on His omnipotent arms." "He who walketh in darkness and hath no light," says Isaiah, let him hope in the Name of the Lord and lean upon his God,[2] his Saviour"

III. More, hope procures us inestimable treasures of grace and spiritual riches, and becomes a source of immense merits, because it is a very excellent and noble virtue, which holds, as we have said, the second rank among the theological virtues, which are the most perfect of all virtues. Hence St. Paul admonishes us, "All acts of hope

[1] Is. xxvi. 4 [2] Ibid l. 10.

merit crowns; you have never made one for which you shall not be rewarded, here and hereafter."

IV. Hope replenishes the soul with a firm assurance of our salvation and beatitude, for, as David says, "God saveth them that hope in Him." O sweet words! Hope fills our hearts with sweet peace and ineffable contentment. *Let us all that hope in the Lord, rejoice*, cries out the Psalmist, *they shall eternally sing Thy praises*, and Thou shalt dwell in them. Thou hast given joy to my heart,[1] says he, speaking of himself, because thou hast singularly established my hope in Thee. We have a powerful consolation, says St. Paul, we who have fled for refuge, to hold fast the hope set before us, which we have as an anchor of the soul, *sure and firm*, against all the waves and tempests of this life. And, in fact, the hope of a great good is always accompanied by a great joy, for nothing more nearly approaches the joy conferred by a desired good, than the hope of possessing it. Behold what St. Francis Xavier wrote from the isle of Moro to our Fathers and Brothers at Rome: "Ah! my very dear brothers, the perils and incommodities suffered in the service of Jesus, our good Master, are great treasures of riches and delights! One would imagine that this barbarous land was destined to see my eyes become blind, so great is the abundance of tears which excessive spiritual joy forces me to shed. Certainly it has often pleased God to bestow on my soul divers interior contentments, but I acknowledge that I have never felt any so tender or so lasting as I feel here, and that of all the labors and sufferings of my life, those I endure here seem the most delightful. When I travel among raging enemies, and treacherous friends, destitute of all means of life, whether in health or sickness, I cannot forbear calling this land, The isle of hope in God.'

[1] Ps.

From the joy with which hope embalms the soul, springs the power to do and suffer all that is necessary for obtaining the object hoped for; hence St. Paul unites these two things: Rejoice in your hope, *be patient in affliction.*[1] The labors are not devoid of pleasure, because of the hope, says St. Austin, and pains become pleasing through the expectation of the promised bliss and glory.

V. Moreover, hope communicates to us admirable power and invincible courage to do great things for ourselves and others: "They that trust in the Lord, says David, shall be as Mount Sion; they shall be fearless of all the efforts of their enemies." My hope is in God, says the Psalmist, speaking of himself, nothing shall *be able to deject me;* no power can be potent against me. I shall always be victorious over every obstacle. St. Bernard, speaking of souls full of confidence in God, says: "They undertake great things because they are great, and they accomplish them, for great confidence merits much." The more you expect of the Lord, the more you will obtain; the Divine Spouse confers great graces on the noble and courageous souls. He does admirable things in them and by them. Some persons wishing to deter St, Charles Borromeo from undertaking the reformation of a few religious in his Diocese who were very relaxed, assured him that his life might even be endangered by such a proceeding. The Saint replied in these noble and generous words, worthy to be eternally remembered: "What! is it to no purpose that there is a God in the world? I will venture, and set out boldly despite of all the dangers with which you say I am menaced. God will take care to defend me, since the business regards His service; and if He ordain otherwise, I shall willingly die for Him." Armed with this confidence, he soon reformed the relaxed, God not failing to succor him in the danger to which he was exposed; for a wicked

1 Heb. vi. 18.

man having aimed a blow with a sword between his shoulders while he was at prayer, the blow, which was sufficient to produce instant death, only imprinted a livid mark on his skin, to serve as a testimony of the protection of God in whom he confided. St. Gregory of Nyssa relates that St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, having retired with his deacon to avoid the cruel persecution of Decius, his hiding place was betrayed, and he was at once surrounded by persons who came to take him. The Saint, to vivify with all his power the sentiment of confidence in God, told the deacon to follow his example and raise his eyes and hands towards heaven, to have no fear and not to move, even should their persecutors lay hands on them. Having raised their hands and eyes to heaven, they began to beseech God with sentiments of the most unshaken confidence. God heard their prayers, took them under the wings of His protection, and so bewildered those who sought them that they took them for two trees, and were thus constrained to return without doing them any harm. Behold the strength and courage which confidence in God gives to the Saints.

It is above all for great things that this confidence is absolutely necessary. *Your strength*, and capability to do great things, consist in remaining tranquil, *in silence and in hope.* St. Francis Xavier, in whom this virtue shone so conspicuously, mentioned to our Fathers at Goa, when giving an account of his voyage to Japan, that the devil, to intimidate him and cause him to lose his confidence in God, represented to him many terrible objects, but that God by His goodness made him then learn many secrets touching the vain fears and panics which Satan uses to terrify cowardly souls, and at the same time taught him the remedies to dissipate them: the chief is to withstand courageously all the alarms and assaults of the enemy, diffiding absolutely in self and leaning on the power of

God, with firm hope of His aid ; and with such a support we must beware of showing ourselves timid ; on the contrary, we must be full of resolution, and promise ourselves the victory, remembering that the demon has no power only what God gives him, so that, under these circumstances, we should rather fear that our hope is not strong enough, than fear the power of the devil. In the preceding letter, after having detailed the dangers of a voyage to Japan, arising from rocks, from Chinese corsairs, from tempests so furious that pilots deem themselves happy when they save one vessel in three, the Saint adds : "It may seem temerarious to undertake this enterprise ; to some it looks like tempting God, to attempt to navigate these tempestuous seas in which so many ships perish, yet having well considered all the bearings of the question, I change my fear into confidence, being persuaded that our Fathers will be more virtuous than learned, and that the fervor of the Holy Spirit will animate that coldness which sometimes follows upon human learning, for otherwise science would cause more damage than profit. I have frequently before the eye of my mind a thing I often heard our venerable Father Ignatius say : that the members of our Society should use all their efforts to vanquish themselves, and to despise the vain fears with which nature and self-love endeavor to prevent our confiding entirely in Him. And as the confidence of those to whom nothing is wanting is far below the confidence of those who abandon themselves entirely to Divine Providence, to serve and imitate Jesus Christ, despoiling themselves of all, even of necessary things, so there is a great difference between the hope in God of those who never endanger their lives, and those who, for their honor and service, wish, supported only by His grace, to seek death in the most evident dangers which they could easily avoid if they would. And I believe that those who expose themselves

to perpetual dangers of losing their lives for the glory of God, arrive in a short time at a great contempt of this life from which they are willingly detached, and attain to a high degree of true love for God, who is able to succor us."

VI. More, hope obtains of God the fulfillment of all His promises, and there is nothing which it cannot obtain. To inculcate this truth, the Royal Prophet makes God say: "Because he hoped in Me I will deliver him. I will protect him, because he hath invoked My Name. He will call upon me and I will hear him. I will be with him in his tribulations. I will save him and glorify him." Our Lord said, in praise of St. Gertrude, to a devout person who had asked a favor without obtaining it: "I have deferred to grant thy petition because thou dost not confide perfectly in My goodness, like My servant Gertrude, to whom I never could refuse any request." This Saint had such great confidence in God, that no child ever had as much in the fondest parents; no temptation or danger could shake her firmness, and she herself regarded this confidence as the cause of all the blessings she received from God. And to speak rationally, if we should see any one hope that we would assist him in his afflictions, and have so high an idea of our charity that he felt we would help him, though the rest of the world abandoned him—would we not help him to the utmost of our power, through a natural sentiment of the human heart? No matter how great our hard-heartedness might be, we would be softened, because the confidence of this person is a high honor to us, being an evident testimony of the esteem he has for us. On one Feast of Holy Innocents, the same Saint, finding it difficult to prepare for Communion, because of the many thoughts that troubled her repose, asked Our Lord to aid her, who made her this remarkable reply: "Whoever, being assailed by temptation, comes to me with firm hope, is of the number of those to whom I say, This is My

dove, *chosen among thousands*, who, with one of her looks, has pierced My Heart ; so that if I were unable to aid her, I should experience a desolation so great that all the delights of heaven could not comfort Me ; and this look of the faithful soul is the firm confidence she has that I can and will assist her ; this confidence does such violence to My Heart that I am constrained to satisfy it most fully."

The Holy Scripture relates that Abiam, grandson of Solomon and King of Juda, fought against Jeroboam, King of Israel, with such success that though his army was less numerous by half than that of his adversary, he gained one of the most memorable victories ever achieved, and it adds that this was because the children of Juda confided in the Lord, the God of their fathers. On the contrary, the misfortunes of Saul are attributed to the little confidence he had in God ; because he hath not hoped in the Lord, the Lord hath made him perish miserably and hath given his kingdom to David, the son of Isaiah. The confessor of St. Lidiwna, discoursing with her on purgatory, said that he was willing to burn in purgatory as many years as there were grains of mustard in a vessel which he showed her, and which was full of it. The Saint, sweetly reproving him, said : " Ah, my Father, you do not well in fixing your eyes so exclusively on the justice of God ; you must rather fasten them on His mercy." And the history adds that this good Priest, otherwise a great servant of God, was detained some time in purgatory for that saying, and because he had not sufficient confidence in the goodness of God, as the Saint learned by revelation some time after his death.

VII. Finally, this generous confidence is very glorious to God, because it can emanate only from a sublime idea of His divine perfections. It is certain that God wishes us to believe Him very good, powerful, liberal and faithful to His promises ; that we should have a very high idea of

the infinite merits of His Son, and that He is glorified when we are penetrated with these sentiments. Well, this is what hope does, in a higher degree in proportion as it is more excellent: I will always hope *in Thee,* says David, *and* by this means *I will always add to Thy praises.* Confidence is also an effect of great love for Jesus Christ, which continually excites the loving soul to honor and glorify Him more and more by the sublime thoughts it inspires of His power, His goodness, His liberality; and it hopes all things from Him because of the experience it already has of His bounty. Hence St. Paul says: *Charity hopeth all things;* and St. Ignatius, the martyr, wrote as follows to the Magnesians: "You clearly show Jesus Christ that you love Him, when you perfectly confide in Him. Therefore the true love of God raises the soul to a higher degree of hope than does any other virtue, or good work. And everybody knows that no one has more reason to hope in a man than his friend, in a father than his child, in a spouse than her husband, because of the love which unites them, and which naturally inspires hope.

Moved by all these considerations, let us constantly and most courageously apply ourselves to practice confidence, and the more so since, like faith, it can be practised only in this life; the future life is not a life of expectation, but of enjoyment; otherwise we shall deprive God of a great glory which we can render Him only here below, hope having no place in heaven, where we shall see Him face to face.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LOVE OF OUR LORD EXCITES US TO HUMILITY.

I. What humility is.—II. Divisions of humility. —III. Means of knowing it well.—IV. What we hold of God, and what we have of ourselves.—V. Consequences of our nothingness.

Charity is not puffed up, is not ambitious, says St. Paul; but it is humble, and bestows on the loving soul true humility

of heart. In order to speak usefully and connectedly of humility, we will first explain its nature and sources, in what and how it can be practised, and the motive to be used in exciting it within us.

I. Humility is, as the Angelic Doctor teaches, a virtue which, by the knowledge it gives of the greatness of God and of our misery, represses in us inordinate desires of honor, makes us wish to be despised by others, and put ourselves, at least in our own estimation, in the lowest place. St. Bernard defines it by these few but remarkable words : "Humility is a virtue by which man, knowing his misery and nothingness, despises himself and appears vile in his own eyes." We will define it to be a just knowledge of the truth, which makes a man take himself for what he is, and nothing more.

II. According to the doctrine of the Fathers, there are two sorts of humility, one in the understanding, the other in the will. There is a humility which truth produces, but which is without heat, says St. Bernard, and there is a humility which charity forms and influences : the one is in the understanding, the other reaches the will. Humility of the understanding is a clear knowledge and just judgment of what we are of ourselves in the order of nature, the order of grace and the order of glory. Humility of the will consists in the affections and desires which flow from the knowledge and judgment ; it is an affection for abasement and a desire of contempt. Properly speaking, humility of the understanding is not the virtue of humility, it is only its root and source, and, as St. Thomas teaches, its rule. The knowledge of our defects and the judgment which we form, that of ourselves we are nothing, belong to humility, says this Father, but only as a rule to direct the appetite and the will : it is in the will that humility properly and essentially resides ; it hinders us from ever elevating ourselves above what is our due. Guided by its

light, we have only base sentiments of ourselves, and we do not wish to be esteemed above what we really are. Behold in a few words what humility is. Let us now consider what the rule is that directs it, let us ascend to the source whence it flows—I mean self-knowledge.

III. To know one's self clearly, it must be remembered that man may be considered in two manners—according to what he has from God, and according to what he has of himself: the knowledge of these two points, well developed in the mind, is the principle of true humility and the ruin of pride. What has man from God? What has he of himself? From God he received his body and soul, all his gifts of nature and grace; from himself he has only nothingness and its consequences; man is like those double pictures which painters sometimes make; on one side is a creature of ravishing beauty, decked with all the ornaments that art can invent, on the other a hideous disgusting figure. Such an image, viewed under different aspects, produces contrary sentiments. When we regard the handsome side, with all it perfections, it inspires esteem and love; when we cast our eyes on the hideous figure it inspires hatred and contempt. It is the same with man. He has two very different faces; if you consider what God has done in him you shall find there the traits of His divine perfections, all is noble, nothing therein is unworthy of honor, because nothing can come forth from Him which savors not of His excellence; and the great Artificer Himself, after having finished his works and examined them well, declared that they were all very good (Gen. 1.)

But if you regard man under another aspect, if you see only what he is of himself, he will appear to you vile and contemptible. You will find in him only deformity, nothingness and sin; he has nothing else of himself. This is how we should consider ourselves, this should be the basis of our judgments. If you know how to separate *the pre-*

cious from *the vile*, says God, what you hold of My goodness, and what you have of yourself, *you shall be as My mouth*, the truth shall be in you.

IV. Let us, then, make this important separation, let us not mingle the property of another with ours, let us not confound light with darkness, let us frankly speak the truth: all that is good in us comes from God. If we have a body, it is He who has given it; if we have a soul, it is His hand that has created it; if we possess riches and honors, if we have talent and virtue, we hold all of His bounty: all the goods of nature, grace and glory, our essence, our powers, our actions, in a word, our whole being proceeds from God as from the first Being, the first power and the first act. Now, of ourselves we are only pure nothingness, and to say all at once, and show all our riches, we are and we have of ourselves, what we were and had a thousand years ago. What were we then? What had we? It is clear that we were nothing, that we had neither body nor soul, wisdom nor strength, goods of nature nor goods of grace. If at present we possess these advantages, they must have come to us from some other source. Therefore must we engrave this truth on our minds: of ourselves we are nothing whether as to soul or body, the goods of nature, grace or glory. God is by himself the necessary, independent, absolute, essential being, and we are of ourselves necessarily nothing. When God bade Moses to order Pharao, on His part, to let the Israelites leave his dominions, He said to him: *I am who am;* in like manner each of us may say to himself: I am who am not. Our Lord said one day to St. Catherine of Sienna: Knowest thou, My daughter, who I am, and who thou art? I am who am. Thou art who art not. I am, therefore, nothingness—all that I have of being is foreign to me. I hold it entirely of God, and so necessarily that though God be infinitely wise and powerful, He could not ordain

that anything should exist independently of Himself. If he wills me to be a man, with such a body, such a soul, such faculties, He must absolutely bestow them on me ; in such a manner that I am, and shall be forever, only a composition of the gifts of God. He preserves His gifts to me with a dependence so absolute and continual, that should He cease to preserve me, I should cease to exist and to fall back into the abyss of nothingness over which He holds me suspended. I speak not only of the nothingness of nature, but also of the annihilation of grace, which is sin ; for if God abandoned me for a single moment, if He withdrew from me His grace, I should infallibly fall by my own weight, and commit all sorts of crime.

Behold, then, what we are of ourselves. St. Paul tells us this : "If any one, man, angel or any creature whatever, thinks himself to be something, according to nature, grace or glory, *he deceives himself*, for he is nothing." Before him the Royal Prophet had taught the same truth in these terms : *I am reduced to nothing ;* I have not of myself one degree of being, *and I knew it not*, words very remarkable, and unfortunately too true. For whence could our pride and vanity proceed, if not that being nothing of ourselves, we think we are something. O, unknown nothingness! exclaims St. Angela Foligno, I tell you for certain that the soul can have no better knowledge than that of her own nothingness, properly considered. The mind of St. Catherine of Genoa was so filled with this knowledge, that she would not even name herself, regarding herself as pure nothingness, and as not having anything but what God had given her. When she fell into a fault, she immediately said within herself, "These are the fruits of my garden. I firmly believe that of myself I can produce no others, and if I do not commit greater faults it is God that restrains me by His powerful grace.

V. The consequences of this nothingness. 1. Since we

are nothing of ourselves, certainly we can do nothing by ourselves, and consequently we are worth nothing: now, it is clear that what *is* nothing and can do nothing, is of no value, because being is the foundation of the power, the merit and all the perfections a thing can have. 2. Our sins are also a consequence of our nothingness: at their head is original sin, in the order of which we have been conceived and formed, which has thrown into disorder all that is within us, especially the four principal powers of our soul: the understanding, by replenishing it with darkness, and blinding it with regard to the things of nature, but still more with regard to those of grace, and subjects it to a thousand errors; the will, by striking it with disorderly self-love, which is the source of all our evils, by rendering it tepid regarding God and spiritual things: the concupiscible appetite by violently drawing it to sensual gratification; the irascible appetite by enfeebling it, and inspiring it with distaste for what is good, and making it brave to undertake evil. Thy origin is of the land of Chanaan—the son Cham whom Noah, his father, cursed—because thou art born under the malediction of original sin: a child of wrath, an enemy of God, a slave of the devil: thou canst not name thy father or mother without shame; thy father, Adam, *was a true Amorrhite, thy mother*, Eve, *a true Cethite*, that is to say, a fool. No one cleansed thee of thy impurities on the day of thy birth, no one washed off thy stains, *thou wert not salted with salt to strengthen thee, nor wast thou wrapped in swathing bands, thou wert left on the earth*[1] till I had pity on thee: behold the state to which original sin had reduced thee. Look next on thy actual sins, consider their number and enormity. See now what we are, and what we ought to know of ourselves, to the end that we may acquire humility of the understanding, and lay the foundations of humility of the

[1] Ezech. xvi. 4.

will, which consists in conceiving base sentiments of ourselves; in despising ourselves and wishing to be despised, and in producing many other effects towards God, towards our neighbor and towards ourselves, which we proceed to develop.

SECTION I.

EFFECTS OF HUMILITY WITH REFERENCE TO GOD.

St. Ambrose speaks truly when he says to Constantine, Bishop of Orange: "Many have the appearance of humility, but not the reality; many are humble exteriorly who are not humble interiorly; they praise this virtue by their words, but combat it by their works." Our humility, says Theophylacte, is not humility of heart, nor true abasement of spirit founded on self-contempt, but only words of feigned submission, certain formulas accompanied with humble and modest terms, but not reaching the heart.

I. What effect has true humility? What thoughts and affections does it inspire? To what actions does it excite its possessor? Humility, says the holy Abbot Isaac, makes a man regard himself as a sinner, never take any vain complacency in his actions, love silence, or if he speak it is for necessary things, and with measure: the humble man does not love disputes, far from obstinately maintaining his own opinion, he delights in yielding to the opinions of others; whether by word or deed, he never gives any one cause of offence, but he bears tranquilly whatever insults he receives. When this queen of virtues, says St. John Climacus, is enthroned in the soul, it excites her to make so little account of her good works, that she regards them as abominable; and the graces which God showers so abundantly

on her, she deems not an aliment to vanity, but as favors of which she shall have to give a rigorous account, and which may even turn to her condemnation if she profit not by them ; it makes her believe that she always increases in vices and imperfections. Whoever has humility soon becomes meek, obedient, easy to yield to others, cheerful and tranquil. Humility, says the Seraphic Doctor, first opens a man's eyes to his own poverty, baseness and misery, and then shows him that no matter how great and exalted his position, he has no right to prefer himself to others or to seek their praises. It afterwards leads him to despise himself, because he believes himself truly despicable, and has of himself nothing worthy of being honored ; moreover, as he loves truth, he even desires that others should have like opinions of him, and that they make him feel it by humbling him. Finally, it elevates him to such a height that far from being inflated by the great natural or supernatural gifts with which he may be adorned, he does not attribute any of them to himself, but refers them all to God, their true source : such are the effects of humility. Let us now see whether they exist in us : but to do this in a more effective and orderly manner we shall commence with those which refer to God as being the most important.

II. The truly humble man knows by the light with which he is enlightened, that of himself he is nothing, has nothing and can do nothing, that he has received from the liberal hand of God, without any merit on his part, his body, his soul, his faculties, and all he possesses in the natural or supernatural order, that he shall possess these gifts only as long as it shall be God's good pleasure to preserve them in him, since at any moment He could withdraw His gifts and reduce him to his original poverty and nothingness; he also knows that in consequence of his nothingness he has a great inclination to sin, that in real-

ity he is a sinner, that he offends the Divine Majesty every day, that he cannot refrain from sin without the help of God's arm and the succor of His grace incessantly given.

Penetrated with these truths, the humble man makes acts of heroic faith in them, imprinting them well on his mind and nourishing his humility with them. I believed a truth which profoundly humbled me, said David ; faith presents me with these words—correct interpreters of my sentiments : Every man is a liar ; we seem to be something and we are nothing, we seem to possess something, and of ourselves we have nothing. My substance, all that I am, is as nothing before Thee. The Psalmist speaks as did Isaias, who said : "All the nations of the earth are before Him as *if they were not ; they seem* less than nothing when compared with Him ; because the knowledge which the humble man has of his nothingness increases in an admirable manner by the comparison he makes of himself with God ; if he sees that he is vile and despicable, he judges himself to be incomparably more so when he contrasts himself with the infinite majesty and glory of God. At this sight he abases himself before God, he humbles and annihilates himself, adoring, praising and glorifying God for His greatness.

Besides, as he knows that he has not in any manner contributed to his production, that he has done nothing to merit the body and soul which God has given him, he regards them not as his own ; and though they are truly his by the gift of God, he thinks, notwithstanding, that they belong more to God than to himself ; that therefore he shall have to render an exact account of them ; that God could deprive him of them without doing him injustice, which evidently proves that He is master of them. Hence he treats them as things appertaining to God, employing them in His service, taking care not to resist his Master in anything whatever, but leaving Him free to dis-

pose of his health, his life, his goods, his honor and all that pertains to him, as He pleases, as things belonging to Him, and because of the profound respect with which he is penetrated for that Divine Master.

Knowing that he is a sinner, and that he every day commits some new fault, he believes that instead of meriting the gifts and graces he continually receives, he is most unworthy of them ; and he is much astonished that God should deign to give him the least of them; he thanks Him with wonderful and ardent affection, regarding himself as too highly honored by any one of them. St. Gertrude regarded it as one of the greatest of God's miracles that the earth was permitted to sustain her, she said that she never knew any one who merited less than herself the graces of God, or who would not have made a better use of them. She could not be persuaded that she received any gift for herself, thinking that she received all for the good of others : for this reason she employed them zealously for the salvation of her neighbor, with a liberality and greatness of soul which made her regard her zeal as a duty of justice, and these gifts as things belonging not to her but to her neighbor ; and she did this with profound humility, and without esteeming herself the more for acting in this manner ; just as the porter of a royal palace does not pride himself on having the key of the door which admits visitors to view all the rare and precious objects within. St. Mary Magdalen di Pazzi, thought herself unworthy to serve God, to participate in the Sacraments, to receive any light, grace or inspiration, to dwell with the Spouses and servants of Jesus Christ, to aid her neighbor in any manner whatever ; she felt that she deserved to be abandoned by God and man on account of her sins. When God chose Moses to be the liberator of His people, the holy man said : *Who am I for so great a work? I beseech Thee, Lord, to cast Thy eyes on some one more capable of*

it.[1] And when Nathan, after having recalled to David the favors God had done him, announced to him on God's part that his posterity should be blessed, the saintly king exclaimed, Who am I, Lord God, and what is my house, that Thou shouldst do me such favors ?[2]

Keenly sensible of his sins, the humble man endures patiently all the interior and exterior afflictions God sends him ; careless as to their immediate source, he supports them with great patience, perfect submission, and even with thanksgiving, fully persuaded that he deserves still more afflictions, that God does not punish him according to his deserts, and that He does him a favor ; for he knows that even if he have committed but one mortal sin, he merits all the eternal torments of hell ; that all the pains and ignominies of this life are too little for the least venial sin, since it deserves the pains of purgatory, which are far worse than all earthly pains.

In short, knowing that he is nothing, and can do nothing of himself, and that his good actions are done by the grace of God, he does Him willing homage for all that he is and all that he does, as to his Sovereign and legitimate Lord ; he publishes before every creature that he holds all of Him to whom is due the glory of all, and as this is one of the most important points of humility we shall treat it more amply in a subsequent section of this work.

Behold the effects of true humility with reference to God in the heart of the humble man. Replenished with these thoughts and sentiments, he presents himself before God ; before this Divine Majesty, in whose presence the highest Cherubim and Seraphim veil their faces, and annihilate themselves, so to say, with sentiments of the deepest reverence, the humble man prostrates himself with holy awe, extreme modesty and profound annihilation of self, to adore this divine source of all his goods.

[1] Exod. iii. 11; iv. 13. [2] I. Paralip. xvii. 16.

SECTION II.

EFFECTS OF HUMILITY WITH REFERENCE TO OURSELVES.

I. Diffidence in self.—II. Flight from praises.—III. The humble man speaks little.—IV. His conduct as regards exterior things.—Examples.

As the humble man, by the lights humility gives him, knows clearly that he has of himself only nothingness and sin, that consequently he has nothing worthy of esteem, and everything worthy of contempt, he really despises himself, and is vile in his own eyes. As he is just and equitable, he desires to give every one his due, hence he is willing, and even desirous, that all men should rate him as he rates himself, and treat him according to the low opinion they hold of him ; and though because of his rank or other accidental circumstances, propriety may not always permit this, yet as far as he himself is personally concerned, he never ceases to desire and seek it as eagerly as the proud desire and seek honor.

I. He avoids with all possible care honors and dignities, accepting them only when the glory of God forces him to do so, and even then he is, as it were, in a violent state, experiencing a bitterness which only the thought of the will of God and the consideration of His service can sweeten. As he knows by his own experience the extreme weakness of man and his continual need of the efficacious graces of God, the danger to which responsibility exposes him of doing things prejudicial to his own salvation and that of others, as persons in authority too often do, he cultivates great diffidence in self, not leaning on his own intellect or judgment, and not engaging in any perilous employment without mature deliberation, but the more he diffides in self the more he confides in God, and cultivates in himself sentiments of heroic hope ; for humility never

produces discouragement, on the contrary, it is the source of true courage, it abases the mind only to ground it more firmly, it becomes void of self only to be replenished with God, it despises its own strength only to clothe itself with the strength of the Omnipotent. When Moses spoke of his insufficiency to fulfill the mission to which God appointed him, immediately God said to him : Be not afraid, *I will be with you*,[1] I will assist you ; what prodigies did he not often work with a simple rod? Hence, the humble alone are capable of great things, because God fortifies and sustains them ; while the proud, being reduced to their own strength, can only display their weakness, and leaning on the reed of their pretended virtue, they cannot go far without falling. All strength is in humility as in its source, says St. Austin, because all pride is intrinsically weak. Even Seneca seems to have attained to this truth, for speaking of anger he says, what with greater reason he afterwards extended to pride, that those given to it have no firmness ; and if they have no firmness, nothing great can be expected of them. Vain, presumptuous minds, permitting themselves to be carried away by proud thoughts, soar, as it were, into the higher regions of the air, and elevating themselves above others, imagine in their reveries that they are great and generous : they deceive themselves, they have no real solidity; they must fall, for they have no sure foundation to rest on. This vanity differs as much from true greatness of soul as audacity does from courage, moroseness from austerity, cruelty from laudable severity. There is great difference between a sublime spirit and a haughty spirit ; and to speak candidly, the proud mind is always little and base, since, grovelling on earth, its highest designs are always but smoke ; while the humble mind elevates itself to God and to things eternal, and therefore it is always great and elevated, truly sublime and heroic.

[1] Exod. iii. 12.

II. More; the humble man never boasts or praises himself; he is silent as to what he is, what he was, the charges he has fulfilled, and everything in him that might be calculated to attract notice; his gifts, natural and supernatural, he hides with care, at first the better to preserve them, and afterwards as he ardently desires that God should be glorified; if he sometimes discovers to a few the rich treasures God has bestowed on him, it is not to be honored of men, but to procure the glory of God and the good of his nighbor; still he always does it with regret and by constraint, saying with St. Paul: *I am a fool* to speak thus of myself, *but you have forced me to it.*[1] One has to use artifice to draw his secrets from him, aud even then his words are the result rather of surprise than of deliberate purpose, so anxious is he to conceal his gifts.

III. Moreover, the humble man speaks little, he is a great lover of silence. Speaking of the degrees of humility, St. Bennet says that we must speak little, rationally and in a low voice; this rule is exactly observed by the humble man, because he knows that the Holy Ghost says: *In many words there shall not want sin*[2]. Something savoring of vanity, or self-complacency will be sure to escape a great talker, and, besides, the humble man considers himself unworthy to speak or to be heard. Yet his silence must be reasonable, that is, he must ever remember that there is a time to speak as well as a time to keep silence. The Saint adds that he must not speak in a loud tone, for it is a mark of arrogance to speak loudly without necessity; loud talking and uproarious laughter cannot be regarded as the effects of humility, which is always reserved and delights in abasement of self.

IV. In exterior things, the humble man always chooses the worst and most inconvenient, as regardes his food, clothing, lodging, offices, etc., rather because he judges

[1] II. Cor. xii. 11. [2] Prov. x. 19.

himself unworthy even of the worst, and because of his nothingness and sins (for, in fact, the smallest of his daily offences renders him unworthy of all) than because he ardently desires to acquire true humility. Now, nothing is more conducive to the acquisition of this virtue than low and abject employments, &c., because they abase the mind and keep it in humble sentiments ; as high and dignified offices etc. naturally inflate man and supply food for his vanity. Besides, as he is very generous of soul, he makes small account of what is held in esteem here below, and he despises worldly goods in proportion as he deems them capable of being prejudicial to his real interest, which consists in acquiring heavenly and eternal goods ; he chooses to be the last and least in every respect, because he knows that he can thus more surely work out his salvation. He willingly converses with persons of low rank because he does not judge of their excellence by their condition, but by the adornment of their souls ; if he discern in them the marks of the Son of God, finding them faithful imitators of the life He led on earth, he will love them more than others. Speaking of the eagle, Job says : *When he sees a dead body he immediately hastens to it* ;[1] this is a faithful image of the humble man : for on one hand, as there is no bird higher than the eagle, the king of birds ; and on the other there is nothing lower than a dead body; yet the eagle no sooner perceives one than he flies towards it with great rapidity. It is the same with a humble man, the true eagle of virtuous hearts, because he has the most penetrating eye and because his wings enable him to soar to the highest regions : when he sees some abject employment he regards it as his prey and nourishment, and he may say of himself what David said of God : *He fixes His eyes on things* which appear *humble.* He feels pleasure in taking a close view of them, *and the high he knoweth afar off*,[2]

[1] Job xxxix. 30. [2] Ps. 137, 6.

for he willingly applies himself to the lowest functions, and flies with all his might from those surrounded with pomp and splendor. Scripture relates of Abraham that he performed all the offices of a servant towards the three angels who visited him in the Vale of Mambré, and whom he took for pilgrims: *He placed before them the butter, the milk and the kid which he had dressed:* he did all himself, says St. Chrysostom, and deeming himself unworthy to sit in their presence, *he stood near them under a tree.*[1] A man of his quality, one hundred years old, to remain standing before the young people who partook of his hospitality, and deem it an honor to wait on them; what humility! St. Louis, the model of kings, every Saturday washed the feet of many poor persons, and often waited upon the hundred and twenty paupers he kept in his palace. At dinner and supper, he had always before him three old mendicants, whom he helped to the viands prepared for himself; he even dined and supped on their leavings, eating and drinking out of the vessels they had used. After his battles, he himself buried the bodies of the slain: at Paris and elsewhere, he visited the sick in the hospitals, never evincing the least repugnance to their loathsome ulcers and other diseases; he even knelt while he fed them. In the Abbey of Beaumont, there was a Religious so deformed with leprosy that he hardly retained the shape of a man; well, this incomparable king, this truly humble and generous soul, gave him to eat, putting the morsels into his mouth and kneeling while he performed the meanest offices towards him; whereupon the Abbot and his brethren were so touched and so astonished, that they could not restrain their tears. But why seek other examples when we have that of the King of Kings, the God of infinite majesty, Our Lord, who aided His poor Mother in her household duties, who worked at the humble trade of a carpenter,

[1] Gen. xviii. 8.

who chose poor Apostles and who always sought what seemed most despicable, most lowly, most laborious.

SECTION III.

EFFECTS OF HUMILITY WITH REFERENCE TO OUR NEIGHBOR.

No. I. The humble man fulfills perfectly all the duties of charity.—II. He places himself beneath all.—III. Why ?—IV. Even beneath sinners.—Conclusion.

I. The humble man despises no one ; he has a good opinion of all, far from calumniating any one he excuses as far as he can, the faults of his neighbor, and speaks well of every one, his words are full of affability, sweetness and respect, according to the quality of those with whom he treats ; he never contests, but after having gently exposed his reasons, yields modestly ; for whoever contradicts others and sustains his opinion with obstinacy, clearly shows that he prefers it to that of others, and that he wishes to vanquish them. These are not the thoughts of humility, it seeks its gains only in its losses, it believes itself a conqueror only when it surrenders. Moreover, the humble man offends no one, he seeks to please all, he does not deem himself better than the greatest sinners, because he knows he is nothing in the order of nature, and if in the order of grace he seems better than they, he owes this not to his own power, but to the goodness of God. He calls to mind these words of St. Austin : "There is no sin which one man has committed but another may commit, if God abandon him." Hence the same Doctor says : "Lord, it is thy grace which has preserved me from the sins I have not committed." The humble man goes still farther, regarding himself as the greatest of sinners, and for this reason William of Paris likens humility to balm, which

being the heaviest of all liquors always sinks to the bottom of the vessel which contains it, and yet it is the most precious. But we shall speak more in detail concerning this matter, for it is a fundamental point from which flow all our sentiments of humility towards our neighbor : humility which appears the most difficult in practice.

II. St. Paul says to all in the persons of the Philippians: "Let there be no contentions among you, no vain glory ; but in the spirit of humility let each esteem all others *better than himself*." After this rule, St. Ignatius prescribes to all the members of the Society of Jesus, to prefer others to themselves, to regard their brethren as their superiors, and render to each the honor and respect his state demands : we shall now give the reason why this great humility should be practised towards others.

III. St. Thomas, carefully examining this question, says: "Two things may be considered in man : what comes from God, that is, all his goods ; and what comes from himself, that is, all his evils :" humility inclines a man to consider in himself what comes from himself, and in others what comes from God, because as it tends to abasement it must view things in this light ; it is a judge to itself, it is a mother to others ; as its principal object is respect and submission towards God, it evinces this respect to all that comes from God. Hence every man ought to consider himself beneath his neighbor, by reflecting on what he is in himself, and what his neighbor holds from God. We must reverence God not only in Himself, but also in His gifts bestowed on our neighbor ; through a spirit of humility submitting to all men, because of God who is in them, and of the favors he has heaped on them. *Be subject to every human creature for God's sake*,[1] says St. Peter, and for the sake of what He has done in them and for them.

[1] Peter ii. 13.

The great secret of this consists in knowing well what men have from God, separating what is divine from what is human, seeing what is good, and closing the eyes to what is bad, all which may be easily done, for according to the maxims of philosophers, it is not contrary to truth when two things are united to think of one without thinking of the other. Princes are greatly honored on account of their birth, though it often happens that those who honor them are greatly superior to them in other respects, and therefore in this aspect, more estimable. On the contrary, the demons are accounted beneath the worst of men, because of their malignity, though in natural gifts they surpass man. We may then separate in our minds things that are united—honor a person because of certain qualities without thinking of others which would render him despicable in our eyes.

Moreover, says the same Doctor, a man may lawfully believe himself the most contemptible of all, if he compare his secret defects with the gifts of God which he perceives in others. But for the better developement of this, we must remember what experience demonstrates, that God so distributes His gifts, that there is not a man who, if he have not certain things he sees in others, does not surpass them in something; thus we see that one has more memory, another more judgment, another more intellect; one has aptitude for the speculative sciences, another excells in eloquence, another is a poet, another an historian; one is born to be a painter, another a sculptor, etc. There is no one human being who has not some natural gift peculiar to himself, and in whose mind we should not discover some hidden treasure were we capable of seeing beyond the surface. Faces are never exactly similar, each has some trait peculiar to itself; so, minds are very different, and have inclinatians and qualities, which at least in this aspect, give them, as it were, a different being.

What we say of nature may also be extended to grace; there is no one who does not receive some special favor, who has not some knowledge, some good sentiment, some holy affection of which others are deprived, and which adorns some good quality that shines only in him. Thus we see that some incline to humility, others to obedience, others to meekness, one prefers abstinence, another prayer, another charity, and what is still more wonderful is, that in the exercise of the same virtue towards which two persons feel attracted, for example, charity, one will have most attraction to one action of this virtue, as the pardoning of injuries; another to visit the sick and help the poor: so true is it that each has something capable of raising him above others, which we can see, or at least presume, and which may aid us in esteeming him and humbling ourselves. There are few, says Lipomanus, on whom God has not conferred some signal favor with which they can render great service to Jesus Christ, and His Church: this he confirms by the example of the women who aided Moses in the fabrication of the Tabernacle, by spinning the curtains which covered it. The robe of the Spouse, that is the Church, is of gold, but it is fringed with various colors, that is to say, the just have all graces, but with variety; they differ among themselves because they possess different degrees, and use them in different ways: the sheep of Jacob were all sheep, but some were speckled; among the ten thousand sheep a rich citizen of Lycanda, in Armenia, presented to the Emperor Justinian, some were black, some white, some yellow, some red, and others diversified in various other manners. St. Gregory the Great has well said: "All is not given to one, lest the multitude of gifts should inspire pride, and cause him to fall; some are given to one, which you do not receive, and some are given you that are refused to him in order that, considering in his heart the good which you have and he has not, he may

in his heart prefer you to himself; and that you, considering in what you are inferior to him, may esteem him more than yourself, that thus all may practise what is written: *Let each esteem all others as his superiors,* seeing in them gifts which he has not." He afterwards shows that St. Peter surpassed St. Paul in innocence, and that St. Paul surpassed St. Peter in wisdom, and he adds: "What climate is with reference to fruits, the Saints are in the production of virtues and the practice of good works: the elect always regard in others that in which others are superior to them, to humble themselves and exalt others; while the reprobate fix their eyes on that in which others are inferior to them, and console themselves by preferring themselves to others." Let us then always regard in others the gifts which they have, and we have not, to the end that, seeing them elevated above us by perfections of which we are void, we may at least increase in humility. The great St. Anthony regarded himself as the least of all—he found in every one some virtue to praise and imitate. The proud Pharisee, on the contrary, passed all the time of his prayer in praising himself, in recounting his good works, and expatiating on sins of which he believed himself guiltless, and laid to the charge of the Publican, who was humbly praying in the temple.

IV. Further, a man may reasonably place himself beneath others, whatever sins they may commit, by thinking that God has not favored them with the graces He has bestowed on him, and that if he had, they would have made a better use of them. Wo to thee, Corozain, wo to thee, Bethsaida, for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles done in thee, they had long since done penance in sack-cloth and ashes. Hence, St. Francis, notwithstanding his eminent sanctity, thought and said that he was the greatest sinner in the world. And St. Paul, the model of perfect men, says of himself: *Christ Jesus came into the*

world to save sinners of whom I am the chief,[1] because I am the most wicked. Elsewhere the same Apostle says: *To me, the least of all the Saints, is given this grace*[2]; the least of all Saints, that is, the least of all the faithful, and, according to the force of the Greek word, the smallest of the small. In the same Epistle he calls himself an abortion, and he adds: "I am the least of the Apostles, who am not worthy to be called an Apostle, because *I persecuted the Church of God*;" he had always his own sins before his eyes; he forgot those of others; he fixed his eyes upon their virtues, and was blind to his own. In a similar spirit, St. Ignatius, the martyr, wrote to the Magnesians: "Though I am a prisoner for Jesus Christ, yet I do not compare myself to any of you who are free." He says to the faithful of Ephesus: "I know who I am; I know myself well; I am Ignatius, the least of all." At the end of his letter, he says: "I recommend to you the Church of Antioch, which I leave because I have been summoned to Rome, laden with chains for Jesus Christ, and the least of the faithful there." St. Catherine of Sienna esteemed herself the greatest sinner in the world; she believed herself to be the cause of all the evils that happened on earth, because she knew that God punishes by temporal affiictions not only those who commit sins but sometimes others: thus the vanity of David was punished by the death of seventy thousand of his subjects, whom the pestilence mowed down in three days. Behold what the thoughts of the Saints were; behold the opinions they had of themselves, and the reasons which inclined them to think in such a manner.

V. Let us force ourselves to imitate them; far stronger are these reasons for us who are not as perfect as the Saints, and who have, therefore, much more reason to humble ourselves. Leaning on these truths, each Relig-

[1] I. Tim. i. 21. [2] Eph. iii.

ious can well attribute to his own faults the afflictions and calamities which befall the house in which he is, and the Order of which he is a member. If you say that others commit greater faults, I answer : Suppose they do? you may be certain that God will not leave their faults unpunished, but will chastise them by some means either in this world or the next. We may regard ourselves as the most wicked of our race, we may even place ourselves beneath beasts, which never offend God, but continually do His will, while man is so often rebellious to Him. We may even rank ourselves below the demons, since they are of a more excellent nature than we ; they had less graces, and they were damned for one mortal sin

I will conclude by citing these remarkable words of St. Bernard : "If we knew truly what we are before God, what degree we hold in His estimation, we would range ourselves as our merit entitles us, neither sinking too low nor rising too high, but as this degree is unknown to us, and as each is ignorant as to whether he is worthy of love or hatred, the safest and most just way is to take the lowest place, to the end that God may afterwards invite us to mount higher, instead of making us descend with shame from an honorable seat into which we may have intruded ourselves. There is no danger in seeking the lowest place, but there is great risk in elevating yourself ever so little above your deserts, or preferring yourself in your heart to a single one, who, perhaps, is your equal, or even your superior in virtue. If you pass under a door, you may stoop as much as you please, but if you elevate yourself, no matter how little, you may break your head. It is the same in spiritual things, there is nothing to fear in humiliations, but the least elevation rashly hazarded, is very dangerous, and even terrible. Hence, O man, compare not thyself with those who are higher or lower ; compare not thyself with any one, for how knowest thou whether the greatest

sinner may not one day surpass thee in virtue, if indeed he do not already surpass thee in the designs of God? Therefore does Our Lord wish that when we sit down, we take not merely a medium place, but the least and the lowest: *Sit in the lowest place*, says He, place yourself beneath all others; beware, I say, not of preferring yourself to them, but of equalling yourself to them. And though our rank may not always permit us to take the lowest place, yet in our hearts we should regard every one as better than we, and superior to us, as St. Paul counsels, and as all the Saints have practised."

SECTION IV.

WE MUST FLY VANITY—MANNER OF CONDUCTING OURSELVES IN OUR GOOD WORKS.

I. Vanity is greatly to be feared.—II. Reasons.—III. Man cannot take vain glory before performing his good actions.—IV. Nor during their progress.—V. Nor after their conclusion.—VI. We must compare our actions with those of the Saints.

I. One of the most dangerous snares in the spiritual life is vanity, and the secret self-esteem which our good works inspire. This is the rock on which thousands and tens of thousands of vessels split, the gulf which swallows them; it is a poisoned arrow which pierces, breaks and kills all it encounters. Fear this dart, says St. Bernard, it flies with great speed, it penetrates very easily, but its wound is not very easy to heal, for it is mortal. If you ask me what this deadly dart is, I will answer: it is vain-glory.

II. All virtuous men ought to fear and fly this dangerous arrow, chiefly for two reasons: First, because, as St. Bernard says, it is the first vice to be attacked, and the last to be overcome, it presents itself first as the boldest; it is the last to retreat as the most obstinate, and the most

difficult to destroy. Plato says that it is the last robe we doff, inasmuch as vanity is, so to say, incorporated with us. The soul can more easily vanquish other vices, either because their sphere is more limited, they are more easily recognized, or because they weary us only at certain ages or in certain situations; but vanity is by far the most general vice, its sphere is by far the most vast, it spreads its venom over all sorts of good works, and even over bad works in which men sometimes glory. So imperceptibly does it glide through the soul of one who does a good action, and so cunningly does it conceal itself therein, that it is very difficult to discover it; many a time actions begun in humility are finished in pride; vanity is no respecter of persons; it attacks all, in all times, at all ages. Second; vain glory makes us lose all the merits of a good work; it is a cruel viper which gnaws the womb that has borne it, and kills the mother that gave it life; it is a moth which eats the cloth in which it has been formed; it is a worm which devours the fruit of the tree which has engendered it, and the more sound and exquisite the tree and fruit are, the more greedily does it prey on them. Amen, amen, I say to you, *they have received their reward*,[1] said Jesus Christ, speaking of those who performed their actions through vain-glory; so that all their labors, their fasts, their alms, their prayers and all their other good works, the immense treasures of merits man acquires by these actions when well done, are entirely lost for them. Have we not, then, great reason to fear this monster, vanity? Let us now see how we can hinder its birth, or stifle it in its cradle, if it be already born. By a monstrous generation, its mother is, properly speaking, some good work, an excellent mother and a wicked child; for bad actions produce vain glory only among the blind. Now let us examine whether a man has any right to be vain of his good actions;

[1] Matt. vi. 5.

for this purpose we will consider a good work before he does it, while he does it, and after he has done it: we shall see what man has of his own, and on what he founds his pretended glory.

III. We must first suppose in the man who does this good work the benefit of creation, which is the foundation of all other benefits, by which God, by His omnipotent arm, drew him out of nothing; and in place of making him a stone or a worm, made him a man, capable of practising virtue, gave him a body, a soul, interior and exterior faculties proper to produce good works. After this benefit, which already deprived man of the right of drawing vanity from his good works, it must be remembered that God, as the Author of Nature, concurs with him in all he does; for otherwise his faculties could not be put in motion; and as the Author of grace, God puts the good thought in his understanding, the good affection in his will, and bestows other actual and preventing graces to the end that he may be excited to the good work and aided to accomplish it; and finally, habitual and sanctifying grace which communicates to him the honorable quality of child, renders him agreeable in the eyes of God, and consequently puts him in a state to render his good work meritorious and worthy of eternal life. All these things are absolutely necessary to render a man capable of doing an action supernaturally good; if one be wanting, it suffices to make him incapable of doing it; for if God should not concur to the performance of his natural actions, he could no longer perform them; without preventing grace he could not perform any virtuous action; without sanctifying grace he could not do any action worthy of heaven. Compared with all this, what is man's part in an edifying action? What dispositions does he bring to its performance? Only the good intention, a will determined to do right, and even this is a gift of God, the Giver of all good gifts.

IV. If we consider the good action while a man does it, we shall clearly see that what we have defined as necessary for its antecedents are equally necessary for its progress, that is, the being which God preserves to man, the concurrence of God in the action, habitual and actual grace which, being called *preventing* before the action, are styled *concomitant* during its continuance, because they surround a man on all sides while he labors. Now what does a man do himself? What is his work? He gives the good intention, the good use of his faculties, his co-operation with grace, in which he often fails, by not co-operating to all its degrees, and in all cases co-operation is always a new benefit of God. As to the intention, it is easy to mingle with it little complacencies, secret self-seeking, vanity, natural satisfactions, human respect and other defects, which glide secretly and subtlely into it, or even some specious pretexts in the good action, which entirely destroy it or at least diminish its value and tarnish its lustre.

V. Finally, to see if, after an action is performed, man can justly yield to vanity, we must consider, first, that it is an article of faith that no man can, without a special revelation, know for certain whether he has sanctifying grace, without which his actions cannot be good or meritorious of eternal life. Second; though he should have a revelation of his being in the state of grace, he cannot therefore be certain that his actions are perfect; even if he have employed all his strength, purified his intentions with all possible care, and that consequently the action appears good, he cannot still be certain that it really is so. St. Paul, that great master piece of the grace of Jesus Christ, said of himself: "I am conscious of *nothing*, when I look into the depths of my heart I discover no sin; it seems to me that I perform my actions purely for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, *yet herein I am not justified*, my

works are not so secure as to admit no doubt, *because He who judgeth me is the Lord*[1]: if I held the balance which weighs and judges them, the sentence would be favorable, because I find nothing reprehensible in them ; but God it is who does this, before whom, as Job says, the moon has no light and the stars are not pure ; and still less is man pure, who is only dust, and *a worm of the earth*.[2] God, with eyes infinitely piercing, often discovers stains in actions which we deem very holy ; weakness in our most courageous works, darkness in our most enlightened, coldness in our most fervent, imperfections in our most perfect. Our sight is not keen enough to see the millions of atoms which float in the species of air, neither is our spiritual vision acute enough to discover many defects which sully our actions ; but God, who dwells in light inaccessible, and who is light itself, knows all ; He daily discovers many which proceed from the infirmity of our nature which is very great, from self-love which is profoundly rooted in us, or from the passions which always hold sway in our mortal body, which may slumber but die not.

Each may then say that he does no work which is perfect at all points, and to which nothing is wanting : *We are all unclean before God*, says Isaiah, *all our justices are as rags charged with ordure*.[3] A garment of this description is calculated to inspire shame rather than vanity ; so the life of the holiest, the most glorious vestment that can cover souls here below, is only a tissue of weak and imperfect acts of different virtues. It is only in the other life that we shall do actions perfectly good, that we shall produce irreproachable works : *I will please the Lord in the land of the living*,[4] says David ; it is only there that we can please without ever displeasing ; but here below in this valley of the dead and the dying, there is nothing which does not savor of corruption. Hence St. Bernard exclaims : "What is all

[1] I. Cor. [2] Job. xxv. 5. [3] Is. lxiv. 6. [4] Ps. cxiv. 9.

our justice before Thee, O God, but a rag covered with ordure, as the Prophet says." If we closely consider the beginning, the progress and the consummation of our good actions, they will appear rather bad than good; in His balance they shall have no weight. Therefore ought we often cry out with David; "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant; do not scan my actions too closely, do not examine them with rigor, for if thou shouldst act thus, *no man living could be justified in Thy sight.*" The holy man Job, after having done incomparable acts of charity, patience, humility and all virtues, well said: *Indeed I do know it is so, and that man cannot be justified compared with God. Although I should have any just thing I would not answer*, but would make supplication to my Judge. I feared all my works, knowing that Thou didst not spare the offender, but I will *pray before my Judge.*[1] We have, then, no reason to esteem ourselves because of our good works, for we may lawfully doubt whether they are good in the sight of God, perhaps they are even bad, and it is seldom that they have that degree of perfection which they ought to have, and which they would have, had we co-operated better with the grace of God, and applied all our faculties to the well performance of them, as we are always obliged to do.

VI. Let us suppose that we have done all, what comparison is there between our good works and those of the Saints? What a difference between our humility and theirs? What a distance between our poverty, obedience, patience, charity, and these virtues as practised by the Saints? Have our mental and vocal prayers the duration, the fervor, the attention, the respect of theirs? Certainly not: before these giants we are but infants, our virtues lose their lustre when compared with theirs. Eliu says, in Job: *He will consider men and say, I have sinned.*[1] St. Gregory, explaining this text, says: "There are some who be-

[1] Job xxxiii. 27.

lieve themselves more holy than they are, because they do not cast their eyes upon those who are better than they;" hence Eliu says: "He will look upon men, and will say, I have sinned; as if he said: He will contemplate the examples of the Saints, and seeing the immense difference between his actions and theirs, he will see that he is wicked, he will discern his ugliness in their beauty, his darkness in their light; and, in fact, the obscurity of the night cannot be appreciated till compared with the brightness of the day.[1] When we shall have well examined our actions, says St. John Climacus, when we shall have measured ourselves with the Saints who have preceded us, and who, like bright torches, have enlightened the world by the rays of their sanctity, we shall discover that we have not a grain of solid virtue, that we do not rightly fulfill the duties of our state, that we have a secular soul under a religious habit. The same Saint tells us of an excellent Religious who, being tempted to vain glory, wrote on the wall of his cell the names of the principal virtues in their highest degrees, as perfect charity, pure, undistracted prayer, inviolable chastity, etc. When attacked by temptation, he said: "Let us see;" immediately he read what he had written, and then he cried out: "Inasmuch as thou hast not acquired these virtues, thou art still far from God."[2] St. Jerome relates that St. Anthony, having seen with astonishment and admiration St. Paul, the First Hermit, said to his disciples, striking his breast: "Wo to me, a miserable sinner, who falsely bear the name of monk." The eminent virtue and heroic actions of the Saints which inspired them with no sentiment of pride, clearly show us our imperfection, and arrest the movements of vanity. Let us elevate ourselves higher, from men let us mount up to the most elevated celestial Spirits, to the Cherubim and Seraphim: the least stain cannot be found in them, they have never

[1] Lib. xxiv, Moral. cap. 6. [2] *Grad.* 23 et 25.

ceased for a single moment to make admirable acts of all the virtues compatible with their estate. Alas, all our virtuous actions cannot approach in value the least of theirs, and yet they are continually abyssed before the Divine Majesty, in sentiments of the most profound humility; they have never felt the least movement of vanity. Let us go still higher, let us consider the Holy Virgin, and the adorable Humility of Our Lord. Let us contemplate the Son and the Mother in the respective degrees of infinite excellence to which God has elevated them Well, they always referred to God all the glory of their virtues, they never glorified themselves, and Our Lord still says in heaven what He once said on earth: *I honor My Father*, in what I do, *I seek not My own glory*, though My actions are so glorious; *there is One who seeks it for Me.*[1] Let us judge, after all this, whether our tepid, imperfect actions, so far beneath the actions of the Saints, ought to excite us to vain glory or self-complacency.

But though our actions were as good, as perfect, as meritorious as those of the Saints, or even more so, we should still be very far from yielding to vain glory, remembering these words of Our Lord, which strike at the root of all vanity and presumption: *When you have done all that is commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants, we have done only what is commanded us.*[2] We are unprofitable servants, because, says Venerable Bede, our good works procure God no advantage, nor has He any need of us or of our works. *I said to the Lord,* Thou art my God, *because Thou hast no need of my goods.*[3] *If thou sin,* said Eliu to Job, *what shalt thou hurt Him? and if thy iniquities be multiplied what shall thou do against Him?*[4] His happiness is such that it can neither be augmented nor diminished. He is so powerful that He can draw from His treasures millions of worlds, all filled with creatures most holy and excellent,

[1] John i. 49, 50. [2] Luke xvii. 10. [3] Ps. xv. 2. [4] Job xxxv. 6.

who will render to Him adorations, honor and service so perfect, that the highest Cherubim and Seraphim could not equal them : if this be not necessary to His happiness, it is clear He has no need of our actions. Moreover, we are useless servants, because we do nothing more than we ought to do, even though we did incomparably more than we do, since He is our God, our Sovereign Lord, and we are His creatures, the work of His hands and His subjects. And we have received from Him so many benefits, He has endured for us such cruel torments and so ignominious a death, that though we should suffer a thousand deaths for His service, we could not acquit ourselves of our obligations towards Him : the Blood of the Son of God is very different from our blood : what are all our sufferings when compared in value to His? Far from glorifying ourselves for what we do through love of Him, we ought, on the contrary, to humble and confound ourselves for doing so little. Look at Him dying on an infamous gibbet, in the most cruel pain : compare your humiliations with His, your pains with His, and then glorify yourself if you are able. This thought, says St. Cyril, is eminently proper to dissipate the smoke of our vanity ; it is a powerful remedy to heal our pride, for if you do not pay what you owe, you are reprehensible, and if you pay it what thanks do you require? *If I preach the Gospel*, says St. Paul, *it is no glory to me, for a necessity lieth upon me to preach the Gospel.*[1] Our condition, our dependence, cause our best actions to be mere duties towards God ; but his goodness renders them meritorious. The holy man, Barlaam, thus instructs the young prince Josaphat : "Should you be attacked by movements of vanity for having quitted the world, and renounced your kingdom, to embrace the solitary life, stifle them by these words : After having done all that is commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants ; and con-

[1] I. Cor. ix. 16.

sider that you have done incomparably less for Our Lord than he has done for you, He who shed the last drop of His Blood for your salvation."

SECTION V.

CONTINUATION.

I. Our good works are rather God's than ours.—II. We must then refer to Him the glory of them. –III. Acts which we should produce towards God.—IV. Towards our neighbor.—V. Towards ourselves.

I. After considering all these reasons, it is easy for us to see that we have no cause to be vain of our good works, but that we have great cause to humble and abase ourselves. God gives us, as we have shown, all the faculties and means necessary to act ; a will to will good actions, an understanding to direct them and a hand to do them. He assists by succors natural and supernatural ; He never leaves us for a single moment while we labor ; and to give to our work the highest touches of perfection and render them worthy of beatitude, He communicates to them a ray of the Divinity, habitual grace. So that if we consider a good work under these aspects, we shall see that God does nearly all, and man scarcely anything ; his very co-operation, which is all he gives, is but an emanation from this divine Sun, a river flowing from this source, that is to say, coming primarily from God, because as it has real existence man alone could not produce it ; it must necessarily come from God, who, as First Cause, sustains the weakness of the second cause. There are in every good action, then, many things which come from God alone, and there is not one which belongs so absolutely to man that God has no share in it. In some Provinces of France, the heir appropriates four parts of the inheritance, and divides the fifth among his brothers ; it is the same with God, and yet

we cannot urge the comparison, because there is no degree of merit in a good work that does not belong to God more than to him, for it is God that effectively produces it, and gives man the power to contribute to it what he does contribute ; thus all comes from God, according to the maxim of philosophers : whoever gives being to a cause, gives being also to its effects, and, according to the saying of Isaias : *Lord, Thou hast done in and by us all that we do ;*[1] without Thee we are powerless.

II. Since our good works belong rather to God than to us, they must be referred to Him, as to the principal cause. Who would believe a wall, says St. Bernard, if it said it brought forth the rays of the sun, which it receives through the window? Who would not laugh at the clouds if they prided themselves on producing the waters they received by evaporation from the earth? As for me, I do not think the rivers have their source in the canals, neither do I think that it is the tongue and the lips that produce wise words. Hence, if I see in the Saints anything worthy of praise and adoration, I glorify God in them, because it is He who operates in them these wonders.

Thou hast opened my eyes, O my light, exclaims St. Austin, Thou hast awakened and enlightened me, and I see that man has no cause to glorify before Thee, because if there be any good in him, great or small, it is the gift of Thy bounty ; evil alone appertains to him. Whoever enumerates his merits, O Lord, enumerates Thy gifts. When David offered the gold, silver and other materials he had amassed for the construction of the Temple, he said to God ; "All is Thine, we cannot give Thee anything which Thou hast not given us."[2] Blessed Angela Foligno said, after having received great graces from Our Lord, and especially the gift of love, that He had enlightened her mind with a light which showed her that all the gifts

[1] Is. xxvi. [2] Paralip. xxix. 14.

she possessed came from God, that of herself she had nothing good, and that consequently it was not she who loved, though she burned with love, but the love of God in her, and she by this love which He had given her.

Therefore should we render to God all the glory of our good works, and prostrating ourselves before the throne of His Divine Majesty, lay our crowns at His feet, crying ; *Thou art worthy, O Lord, our God, to receive the honor and glory* of all our virtues and good works, *because Thou hast created all*,[1] and of Thy pure bounty given us grace to perform them. Remark that the old men use the word *created*, which means drawn out of nothing, and which appertains to God alone, to show how far our good works are His. Penetrated with similar sentiments, we should exclaim with David : The right hand of the Lord hath wrought strength : it has done the good work ; *the right hand of the Lord has exalted me ;* it has fortified mine and given me power to perform this act of humility, of patience, of charity, *the right hand of the Lord hath signalized His strength;*[2] it is then to the Lord that we must attribute all the glory of our works. Thus when the faithful servant of the Gospel rendered to his master on account of the use he had made of the money confided to him, he said : "Thy pound hath gained five pounds :" he speaks not of his own work, all that counts as nothing. St. Teresa, speaking of herself, says that she knew so clearly that all our good actions come from God, that when she did any, or saw others doing them, she at once began to praise Him as their true source, and by this means she paid no attention to her own share in any good work.

We must always remember our own inability, our miseries, our sins ; otherwise it would be very difficult for us not to pride ourselves on the ornaments in which we are decked, but which belong not to us. Explaining these words in

[1] Apoc. iv. 11. [2] Ps. cxvii. 16.

Job: *Where wert thou when I laid the foundation of the earth?* St. Gregory says: "By these words God wishes to say to the justified sinner: Do not attribute to yourself the virtues you have received of Me, use not My gifts to raise yourself against Me, consider the state in which I found you when I laid in you the first foundations of virtue, recall what you were when I established your heart in My fear, cease not to consider where I went to seek you, in order that I may not destroy what I have wrought in you." Now which of us has not God found in the midst of crimes and imperfections? Father Avila relates that a great lord having espoused a poor villager, (not through passion, but with judgment and reflection, that he might have an obedient and humble spouse;) lest the riches and pomp of her new position should inflate her, took the rags which had covered her when he first thought of espousing her, and hung them up in a place where she could often see them, that thus she might never forget the meanness of her origin, nor the profound respect she owed to her lord, who was so superior in dignity to her. The celebrated Mary, niece to St. Abraham, whose life St. Ephrem has written, never forgot her fall; notwithstanding the heroic virtue she practised, and the miracles she operated, the view of her past sins was always before her eyes as the safeguard of her humility. Even Agathocles, a pagan prince, the tyrant of Italy, caused himself to be served at table in an earthenware vessel, that in the midst of his riches he might remember the poverty of his birth, his father having been a potter. In like manner, we must in our good works, fix our eyes on what we are of ourselves, on our nothingness, our weakness, our sins, and thus stifle within us the breathings of vanity; when the bee flies she always carries an atom of gravel that she may not be blown away by the violence of the winds, even so must we in our great actions carry about us some gravel, that is to say,

the sentiment of our misery and nothingness : otherwise we should soon become the sport of the winds of presumption and vanity.

III. Thus should we shelter ourselves from vanity, and for this purpose it will be good when we perform any virtuous actions to make, 1, an act of faith, firmly believing that if there is any good in the action, it comes from God and His grace ; 2, of thanksgiving, that He has deigned to give us strength to do it, for without His aid we could not accomplish it ; 3, we must refer faithfully to God as to its true source, all the glory and praise the action merits ; 4, we must, through a motive of love, transfer to Him all the merit of the action, and cede to Him all our rights over it, that He may dispose of them as He pleases ; 5, we must ask pardon for the faults we have committed in this action; because it is very difficult, whatever pains we take, to be free from some imperfection, either interior or exterior, in its performance. It is thus we should act towards God in our good works of every description.

IV. As regards the neighbor, we ought not to prefer ourselves to him because we know not with certainty whether our actions are better than his : God could give His gifts to him as well as to us, and perhaps he would have profited better by them ; besides he may have received hidden gifts greater than ours, and done interior actions more meritorious than all we do. If it be impossible for us to conceive a good opinion of our neighbor, because we see him plunged in vice, we may at least think that, like Mary Magdalen, Mary of Egypt and so many others, he may one day far excell us in virtue, and be elevated above us in heaven for all eternity. Who has told us, however great our good works, that we are among the number of the predestined, and that he, however enormous his crimes, is among the reprobate? Let us then ever strive to regard ourselves as the worst of all, to the end

that we may preserve and augment within us the gifts of God. Rufinus relates that St. Anthony, having learned by revelation that there was at Alexandria a very holy man, a currier by trade, who had attained higher perfection than Anthony had, after all his austerities and prayers, sought him and having found him, asked what he had done for God's service, what were his most ordinary exercises of devotion ; and besought him to conceal nothing. The good man, full of confidence, and judging he had nothing to hide, replied : "I am greatly astonished, Father, at your request : for I do not think I have done anything good, and for this reason every morning when I rise, I say to myself that all in this city, from the least to the greatest, have reason to hope for heaven, which they strive to merit by their virtue, while I alone have reason to fear hell because of my sins. In the evening I repeat the same, fully convinced of its truth." It is thus we should judge of our good works, when we compare ourselves with our neighbor who may be so much better than we.

V. Considering our actions in a manner purely personal to us, we must, with all possible care, fly vain glory, not only through fear of robbing God of what is justly due to Him, since we could not perform them without His aid, for it is with His arms we combat, and with His power we gain the victory ; because they are new benefits which will only entail on us great misfortunes if we profit not by them ; because they being only an increase of our obligations ought not to puff us up, and some Saints received these favors with fear and trembling ; but also because vanity corrupts the whole good work, renders it deserving of chastisement rather than reward ; because it is a proximate disposition to some fall, it makes us perform the next action badly, for God withdraws from man His efficacious graces and lets him fall, to show him by his own experience and at his own expense, the greatness of his weak-

ness and inability, that it is not by his own strength but by grace that he can do right, because so great is the blindness that accompanies vanity that the vain man is not ashamed to exchange the sovereign beatitude and eternal glory prepared for him, for the smoke of human applause, for the good opinion of a man who will not think of it two hours after. Vanity can never be solid, since it rests on two bad foundations : in the first place the action merits nothing, since it has been done for a vicious purpose, and therefore is worthy of blame, not of praise ; and in the second, the judgments of men which are so unjust in the distribution of glory, and so different that some condemn what others approve of, and what excites the admiration of some, appears ridiculous to others. O, what little account do those who really desire true glory make of false glory ? We care not for the lurid glare of the torch when we are illumined with the bright rays of the sun. Hold for certain that one degree of God's esteem is more profitable and glorious to you, than if you received the plaudits of the universe, and that the good opinion your Holy Angel shall have of you ought to be dearer to you than that of many people, or of all people.

Let us, then, close all the avenues of our heart to vanity; let us be as much as possible on our guard against this monster. Let us fly vain glory, says St. Basil, as a cruel enemy of our salvation which, like a moth, devours our virtues, causes terrible ravages in our hearts, destroys our merits, deprives us of the fruits of our labors, deceives us by a false exterior and presents to us poison in the guise of honey. Let us seek true glory which consists in doing all for the glory of God, which by this means becomes ours ; let us attribute to God all the honor of our good works by regarding them as the effects of His grace, and He will give us the profit of them. Let us imitate the Saints, who so much feared and so well guarded against

vain glory. St. Catherine of Sienna, after having received such extraordinary favors of Our Lord, and wrought these admirable works which have rendered her so illustrious in the Church, told the devil, who accused her of vanity, in her last moments, that he was a liar, for that she had never been impelled by any motive but the glory of God. St. Thomas Aquinas, so renowned in learning and nobility, the oracle of the wise and the example of holy men, never during his life yielded to a motion of vanity or sinful complacency in the gifts of nature and grace with which he was so munificently endowed. St. Ignatius had so subjugated this vice, by the great knowledge of what he was and what he could do of himself, that he said he feared it less than any other vice. We read in the life of St. Bernard that, though he was the most brilliant light of his time, and produced immense good throughout the Christian world by the sanctity of his life, the depths of his learning, the splendor of his miracles, the weight of his authority, he regarded himself as an unprofitable servant, an unfruitful tree; he said that he could not see in what he was profitable to any one, so that as his historian remarks, he whom all the universe admired was the only one who did not perceive the splendor of his glory; like Job who had never regarded the sun in his splendor, nor the moon in her brilliancy. True Christians, as St. Macarius of Egypt well observes, who are truly great before God, who are endowed with sublime light and knowledge, and covered with divine riches, are, nevertheless, very little in their own estimation; they think they know nothing, they regard themselves as poor, and this mean opinion of self is so deeply grounded in them that it seems natural to them, it would hardly be possible for them to entertain any other.

Thus should we ignore our good actions, and hide ourselves: "If," says St. Antony, "we do not cover the eyes

of a horse which turns a wheel, he cannot possibly use them to serve us, else, he would soon get the vertigo. In our virtuous actions, we must veil our eyes, otherwise it will be difficult for us to keep our heads steady. "I will conclude this section by a memorable fact, related by Sulpicius Severus, which shows us the great horror the Saints had of vain glory. A very holy man, of astonishing austerity, to whom God seemed to have given absolute power to drive out devils, seeing his reputation spread everywhere, being esteemed by the great, honored by the little and followed by all, began to feel some motions of vain glory; at first he strove vigorously to repress them, but the temptation being daily renewed with ever increasing fury, because the demon maliciously incited people to overwhelm him with praises, unable to hold out any longer, he with tears besought God to permit him to be possessed by a devil for the space of five months, that he might thus be freed from the temptation: God heard his prayer, immediately the devil entered his body, causing him to do and suffer all that demoniacs usually do and suffer; but at the end of five months he was delivered at once from the demon and from the temptation. By making such a petition, he effectually showed his great aversion for vain glory: let us learn by his example to use, at least, means not half so rigorous, by which we may combat it successfully.

SECTION VI.

WHAT WE SHOULD DO WHEN WE SHALL HAVE FALLEN INTO ANY FAULTS.

I. We must profit by our falls.—II. How to consider them with regard to God.—III. To ourselves.—IV. To our neighbor.—V. Reasons to induce us to take correction well.—VI. How we should receive it.

I. One of the most signal traits of the wisdom of God is, to draw good from evil, and to cause sin which is com-

mitted against His will, to minister to His glory and the salvation of souls ; in like manner it is an effect of great wisdom and high prudence in man, to make of his faults subjects of virtue. Sin resembles ordure which by itself is disgusting, but which when spread on the earth fertilizes it, and makes it bear fruit in abundance : of its own nature sin is but ordure and infection, yet it may become serviceable to the souls of the elect, and if it injures them for a while in this temporal life, it aids them to acquire the life that is eternal. It is prejudicial to the reprobate in this life and in the next, by depriving them of grace here and of glory hereafter ; but the elect know how to render their sins useful, they establish themselves by their falls, they enrich themselves by their losses, they draw health from sickness and life from death. Hence several Doctors say, that the sins they commit, inasmuch as God permits them, are an effect of their predestination, because these sins make them more watchful over self, and incite them to lead afterwards a better life. *All things contribute to the good of those who love God*, says St. Paul, *of those who are called* according to His decree, to sanctity, even sin, as St. Austin explains when writing on this text.

II. Now in order to render our sins useful to ourselves, we should consider them as follows : 1, before God, humbly confessing ourselves sinners : I know my iniquity, said the penitent David, I frankly acknowledge my sins. 2, we should then make acts of profound contrition ; for these acts put our soul in a better state than it was in before the sin, they repair our losses with advantage, because they wash our souls and render them purer than ever. Our Lord explaining this to St. Gertrude, makes use of an excellent comparison : When a person who loves neatness, said He, perceives a stain on his hand, he immediately washes his hands, and thus his two hands become purer and clearer than before : in like manner, the soul

that washes in tears of bitter repentance a fault of which she has become guilty, and which is not perhaps very grievous, purifies herself entirely and becomes more pleasing than ever in My eyes. We should beg pardon of God with all possible earnestness for this fault, as for an injury we have done Him, an outrage we have committed against His Divine perfections, a monstrous ingratitude, after we have received so many benefits, an opposition to His will, an infraction of His laws, a refusal to correspond to His grace. We must make a firm resolution not to commit it any more, asking the grace of not relapsing again, with firm confidence, for without the divine aid we should soon repeat it. Read what has been heretofore said on sacramental confession.

III. For that which regards ourselves, we should humble ourselves sincerely, and we may remark here that the greatest of humiliation we can have is not misfortune, banishment, ignorance, death by the hand of a murderer, nor all that men and demons can do to dishonor us, but sin alone. The reason of this is clear, for sin is of all possible things, if indeed it merits to be classed with other things, the vilest, the most infamous, the most disgusting. It is the most wicked, or rather it is the only wickedness, since it alone renders man wicked ; it changed the bright and beautiful angels into deformed, abominable creatures. Sin is, of all things, the most opposed to God, it includes nothing of the being of God ; there is no creature, be it a fly or a grain of sand, on which God has not imprinted some trait of His perfection, some ray of His excellence : sin alone has nothing of His, none of His beauty, goodness, and wisdom ; and as God is nobleness, greatness and essential power, it must necessarily follow that sin is baseness and even infamy ; that it degrades, vilifies and abases man, and puts him even beneath himself, because the servant is always inferior to his master ; and whoever com-

mits sin, says Our Lord, is the servant of sin, but with a servitude the more dishonorable as it is voluntary, and places man in the most ignominious position possible. St. Gregory Nazianzen calls sin the mother of abasement. The Royal Prophet had said before him : *They have become humbled,* degraded, *by their sins.*[1] And this humiliation, according to the force of the Hebrew word, is not the virtue of humility, but rather opprobrium, as Cardinal Hugo explains this text.

Since this is so, the sinner must regard himself as beneath all that is vile and contemptible, humbling himself profoundly as it is reasonable he should ; the knowledge he has of his baseness should engender a low opinion of self, which should appear in his words and actions, so far as prudence permits. His falls should render him more considerate, and make him avoid those slippery occasions of sin in which he might easily glide downwards. But the sinner must also beware of being so troubled at the sight of his sins that his repentance degenerates into anguish and discouragement, as sometimes happens through the artifice of the devil, who excites these discouragements, and who profits more by them than by the fault itself, because they deprive the soul of confidence in God, banish that joy of heart so necessary to the practice of good works ; and this discouragement often comes from hidden pride and secret confidence in our own strength, as if we could prevent our faults without the aid of grace. When we fall into any sin we ought to say : Behold what I can do of myself, and if God did not restrain me, I should do still worse. We must put in the same category the sadness of those who are grieved for having sinned, not because God is offended thereby, but because they are less esteemed and lose some little of the reputation they had acquired ; as also the feeling that makes

[1] Ps. cv. 43.

one avoid sin in order to be considered prudent and irreproachable, and watch continually in order not to commit any open violation of rule. To avoid faults from this motive is to commit greater ones ; and very often certain exterior failings of pure surprise, in which the will has no part, though they make us blameworthy before men, render us pleasing to God, because they serve to humble us : this is why we must avoid them if we can, since they are imperfection, but it is not necessary that we should have very great fear of them, for such fear ordinarily proceeds from a dread of experiencing confusion and of being less esteemed. If some religious persons examine well the motives which urge them to keep their rules, to be faithful to their practices, to acquit themselves well of their duties, they would see that they are not always influenced by the pure love of God, but rather by the fear of being reprehended, of incurring some blame or receiving some penance, of not being well spoken of in the house, etc. Though these motives be not entirely censurable, they hinder the good works they animate from being as pure as they might and could be, and they ought, therefore, to be purified and replaced by the pure love of God our Lord.

I will conclude by saying that when we have committed any sin, we should immediately humble ourselves before God that we may be restored to His favor ; ask pardon of Him, show him that we desire to correct ourselves, and combatting dangerous sadness and discouragement, strive to do the following action well, to repair the preceding and regain what we have had the misfortune to lose, because if we be not on our guard, one fault will draw another after it, one action will communicate its venom to another, either because the mind has become weakened by the fault, or because of the bitterness all sin naturally leaves in the soul, thereby rendering it less fit for practicing virtue ; hence after having committed some of the

faults to which we most easily yield, as anger, impatience, etc., we go to prayer with disrelish and distraction, we support with difficulty the slightest trouble, either because in punishment of the fault God gives us less grace, or because the devil, elated with the victory he has gained, attacks us more fiercely. Hence we ought carefully to watch over ourselves, and as a good horse goes more quickly after stumbling, strive to repair the preceding action by doing the following with greater perfection.

IV. 3. As regards our neighbor, we should in our failings humble ourselves and esteem him more than ourselves ; receiving in good part his reprimands, not excusing ourselves, but rather accusing ourselves, and discovering our imperfections instead of hiding them.

We have reasons enough to humble ourselves ; we may even abase ourselves beneath the lowest by the consideration of the motives already given.

Regarding the confession of our faults, it cannot be denied that unhappily we naturally hide our defects, as far as we can ; we do not wish to be reprehended, we are ingenious in disguising them, and making them appear less. St. Gregory says, explaining these words of Job : *If as a man I dissembled my iniquity, hiding my sin in my bosom:* [1] It is the mark of true humility to know our faults and confess them ; but the evil is that men sin as secretly as possible, and afterwards deny it, or aggravate it by defending and excusing it, when they cannot deny it.[2] This the holy Doctor shows [3] by the example of our first parents, who, after their sin, hid themselves under trees to escape the eye of God, not that they could do this, for His gaze pierces the greatest obscurity, but they wished to do it if they could ; then they excused themselves. Adam threw the blame on Eve, Eve on the serpent. Now, says the Saint, all men, who, like branches, have come from one

[1] Job. xxxi. 33. [2] Lib. 22 Moral. 9 and 19. [3] ibid.

trunk, have sucked this venom ; when admonished of their sins they cover them with a crowd of excuses, and they endeavor to fly the eye of the Creator by seeking to hide from Him the knowledge of their sins ; they deceive themselves, they cannot hide themselves from Him, but they cause Him to hide Himself from them.[1] The beginning of the happiness of the sinner, the first ray of light, is humility to confess his faults and imperfections.

V. It would be appropriate to ask of one who takes amiss the correction given him, whether he thinks himself impeccable, or believes there is nothing in him deserving of reprehension. We should acknowledge freely that we are all sinners, and that this maxim is very true : The most perfect is he who has the fewest defects. We can, doubtless, desire to have no defects, but to this we cannot attain here below : this happiness is reserved for heaven. *In many things we all offend,*[2] says St. James. *If we say we have no sin,* says St. John, *we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*[3] Whoever imagines that he can live without sin, says St. Austin, does not therefore become sinless, he only puts himself in a position of not obtaining pardon of his sins. The same holy Doctor, when combating the Pelagian heresy, maintains chiefly three truths : 1st, that grace is not given our merits ; 2nd, that we are all born culpable of original sin ; 3d, that however great our sanctity we can never in this life be wholly free from sins, at least the slightest. Job, that holy man, says in the same sentiment, according to the explanation of St. Gregory : *If I be washed, as it were, with snow-waters, and my hands shall shine ever so clean : Yet Thou shalt plunge me in filth, and my garments shall abhor me ;*[4] for this body with which my soul is clothed shall always retain the marks of its corruption. We may say this of sin, and we may say it with greater reason of other failings from which the

[1] Lib. 22. Moral 9 and 19. [2] James iii. 2. [3] I. John i. 8. [4] Job ix. 30.

wisest and most prudent are not exempt.[1] In an excellent discourse he made on this subject, St. Chrysostom says : "Though you were possessed of extraordinary wisdom, though you were a prodigy of learning, still you are a man, and consequently you have need of counsel ;" God alone has no need of it ; hence Isaiah says of him : *Who hath forwarded the Spirit of the Lord ? or who hath been his counsellor and hath taught him.* However prudent we may be we shall always do many things that have need of being redressed. *For all things cannot be in man,* says Ecclesiasticus, *because the son of man is not immortal.*[2] Our life is so short that though we should have the necessary capacity, we have not sufficient time to learn a thousand things that others know, because one cannot apply to everything, and when we consider the nearly infinite multitude of creatures, their varied operations, and, in fact, all that passes in the universe, it is clear that for one thing a man knows, there are millions of which he is ignorant. What is more luminous than the sun ? continues the same holy Doctor, and yet it has its eclipses ; the clouds obscure to us the light of this great torch, even in its meridian glory ; in the same way, levity, ignorance or passion darkens our intellect in its greatest power ; and it often happens that a very clever man fails to perceive what is clear enough to a person of ordinary capacity. We have an example of this in Moses, who was so well versed in sacred and profane knowledge, so eminently holy, with whom God spoke as a friend to his friend ; in short, one of the greatest personages that ever appeared on earth, who wrought such prodigies in Egypt, overturning the laws of nature, and subduing the pride of a powerful king ; yet with all his science and capacity, he failed to perceive what many others would readily remark, and what Jethro, his father-in-law, an unlettered man, and even a pagan, soon saw and ad-

[1] Lib. 9. Moral. cap. 19. [2] Ecclus. xvii. 29.

monished him of: this was that it would be necessary to share his authority with others, lest trying to do too much he should give way beneath the weight of his labor. Add to this, the example of St. Peter, the prince of the Apostles, who, after having received on the Feast of Pentecost, the plenitude of the lights of the Holy Spirit, was not aware that it was not necessary to dissemble with the converted Jews concerning clean and unclean meats, and on this subject St. Paul reprehended him. Thus we see that the two conductors and chiefs of the people of God, Moses in the old law, and St. Peter in the new, made mistakes, and cheerfully submitted to correction: the greatest men can, then, be deceived.

Since, then, all men, even the wisest and holiest, are sinners, and liable to be deceived, and in effect commit faults, as we daily see, is it not astonishing that they take friendly, useful admonition so ill, and experience such pain when reproved? If some one informed us that our dress was soiled, that we wore our mantle wrong side out, etc., far from being displeased, we would be thankful. On this subject St. Basil remarks: "We are grateful to physicians and surgeons who restore our bodily health, we regard them as our benefactors, though they make us swallow very bitter pills, and apply knife and caustic to our wounds: is it not astonishing that we have not equal gratitude for those who contribute to the health of our souls, even though their reproofs be not always sweetly administered?" St. Chrysostom remarks that Moses willingly heard the advice of Jethro, and immediately followed it: Moses has even consigned this circumstance to writing, and thus made known to posterity that he was deceived, and that a man so inferior to him had corrected and instructed him; he wished to teach us that, however intelligent we may be, we ought not to pride ourselves, since we are not infallible, and therefore we have need of counsel and admoni-

tion, and should take them in good part, and endeavor to profit by them. St. Peter received very well the interference of St. Paul; he approves, in the second Epistle he wrote, of what St. Paul says on this subject in his Epistle to the Galatians.

We ought, then, in imitation of these Saints, we, who are so inferior to them in virtue, and commit far greater faults, to receive with gratitude the advice given us, and to correct our faults when they are pointed out to us. The Saints being solidly grounded in holy humility, were willing to learn from any one; though they were oracles of science they consulted those to whom they might be masters; they willingly harkened even to children, as we read of the incomparable Doctor St. Austin, of Gerard the Great, a most holy man, and the most learned of his time; they felt that wise as they were they might be deceived, and that God would enlighten them more by this submission and humility than by the vivacity of their wit and the force of their studies. And Our Lord, who knew all things perfectly, knew infinitely better than Mary and Joseph what should be done in the house of Nazareth, and in the shop of Joseph, followed their direction in all things, doing punctually what the Holy Virgin told Him in the house, and what St. Joseph told Him concerning his humble trade. And when He interrogated the Doctors, at the age of twelve years, was it that He might learn anything of them? Was it not rather that He should teach us humility? Since we are so ignorant, and fall so often and so grievously, let us not be unwilling to be advised and corrected. Besides these admonitions are very profitable to us; they show us defects which self-love hides from us. The salutary bitterness of these reproofs leads us to correct ourselves, and in permitting that we be admonished of our faults, God designs to remit them, provided we take these reprehensions with submission and without ex-

cusing ourselves ; to give us helps to avoid relapses and to augment our merit by the acts of virtue we practise when corrected. St. Gregory remarks that God questioned our first parents, because He designed to forgive them when they frankly confessed their fault, and to show mercy to them ; but He did not question the serpent because He was not going to pardon him.

Hence the Scripture says, speaking of reprimands : He that hateth to be reproved walketh in the trace of a sinner, *and he that feareth* God will turn to his own heart and set it in order.[1] *Whoever loves reproof loves wisdom,*[2] says the Book of Proverbs ; and he who *hates reproof is a fool.* St. Chrysostom remarks that there is here question of reprimands in general, and not of correction from this or that quarter, to teach us that reproof from whatever quarter, whether accompanied with sweetness or bitterness, with affection or hatred, is always useful to us to discover to us our faults, and enable us to correct them. If a man angrily snatches me from the brink of a precipice, I owe my delivery to him ; his anger injures only himself *The prudent man will not murmur against correction,*[3] says the Holy Ghost, *reprehend not the scoffer lest he hate thee,* but reprehend the wise and he will love thee. Teach the just and he will hasten *to profit by thy instruction.*[4] We see by these texts that the difference between the virtuous man and the man who is not virtuous is, that the virtuous man loves correction and takes it in good part. It is said that when the bear feels his head charged with humors, he puts it into a beehive, that the bees may sting it and thus draw out the bad blood ; in like manner the just expose themselves to the stings of reproof to be thereby freed from defects, which, like corrupted blood, injure the health of the soul, by lessening its vigor in God's service.

VI. Now how should correction be received? St. Ber-

[1] Ecclus. xxi. 7. [2] Prov. xii. 1. [3] Ecclus. x. 28. [4] Prov. ix.

nard teaches us when he says : " Whoever receives correction well answers sweetly the person who reprehends him, acknowledges his faults very humbly and without excusing himself, testifies regret, and amends it ;" we add that he ought to thank whoever reprehends him, for such a person does him a great favor.

But not only should we not excuse ourselves when corrected, we should even accuse ourselves freely of our faults, as far as prudence, and the edification of our neighbor, permit. The proud display everything in themselves that could attract applause, hiding most carefully, and disguising by a thousand artifices, whatever might cause them to be less esteemed ; but the humble hide as far as they can their natural and supernatural perfections, and discover their defects ; as the mouth is the organ of the sentiments of the heart, according to the word of Our Lord, the just man, who has a low opinion of himself, says nothing that does not savor of the certitude he feels of his nothingness and misery. St. Dorotheus relates of an ancient Father that when asked what he thought the surest way of going to God, he replied : " To accuse and condemn ourselves in everything." The holy Abbot Pastor says pleasantly on this subject that all the other virtues going to visit one in particular, man vainly strove to enter her palace with them ; and on being asked what the virtue was to which the others paid so much respect and honor, he replied : it is self-accusation.

He who hides his crimes shall not obtain pardon, says the Sage ; *but he who confesses and corrects them shall obtain mercy.* St. John Climacus relates that a man of very dissipated life desiring to become a Religious in a very strict monastery, the Abbot consented to receive him, if he would make a public confession of all his sins before all the monks, to the end that this painful accusation might serve to keep him humble during the rest of his life, and

that the temporary shame he should thereby experience might free him from the eternal shame his sins deserved. The man willingly accepted this condition, and even said that he would, if permitted, make his general confession in the market place of Alexandria. On the next Sunday, then, in the Church, after the gospel, in the presence of three hundred and thirty Religious, he confessed all his sins, some of which were very enormous ; but God recompensed this generous action, and the sinner did not rise till all his sins were pardoned. A brother saw a man of frightful aspect who effaced, from a book he held in his hands, each sin as it was confessed. The Royal Prophet after having made to God this prayer : *Do not suffer my mouth to speak malicious words, seeking vain excuses for my sins*, speaks continually of his faults in the Psalms ; he declares that he was conceived in sin, he acknowledges his defects, he says that he is sad, desolate and distracted ; he discovers his temptations ; as that he had been almost scandalized in his thoughts of Providence by seeing the wicked prosper and the good in opprobrium; he calls himself poor, a liar, a worm of the earth, the refuse of men. St. Austin, one of the greatest Doctors of the Church, but even more humble than he was learned, is remarkable among the saints on this point, particularly by two of his works, his *Retractions*, and his *Confessions :* in the first he details his mistakes, and then retracts them ; in the second his sins, and deplores them, and is not ashamed to make known to all men what it is often hard enough to tell one man in the confessional.

But, as St. Gregory remarks, people often avow their faults without being humble ; for if others accuse them they are angry ; like the Religious who would not suffer the monks of a monastery he visited to wash his feet, though they did this to every stranger ; who protested that he was unworthy of the habit he wore, and even to

pray with the others, but was yet greatly piqued when the Abbot Serapion told him that it would be better for him to stay in his cell and work and pray than to be visiting about from one monastery to another : for if those who thus accuse themselves really mean what they say, they would be satisfied that others should believe it too. We say often enough that we are sinners, says St. John Climacus, perhaps even we believe it, but humiliation will prove this. Hence, concludes St. Gregory, we learn whether you practice humility in your self-accusations, if when others accuse you, far from contradicting them, you frankly avow your fault. To this we add that when we speak of self humbly, discover our defects, practice public penance as far as our rule permits, we must at the same time humble ourselves interiorly before God and man, and use these exterior humiliations as evidence that we really believe ourselves to be beneath all creatures by our sins and defects.

SECTION VII.

OF THE PRACTICE OF HUMILITY.

I. Divers modes of practising this virtue.—II. All can make acts of humility.

In the first place we must often make lively acts of faith in our misery ; for example, I firmly believe that I am nothingness of all being, of body, of soul, of essence, of faculties, of action, of all the gifts of nature, and grace, and glory. I believe that of myself I am nothing, I have nothing, I can do nothing, I am worth nothing, that I have neither being, goodness, wisdom, power nor virtue, only inasmuch as God gives and preserves them to me ; that I cannot have the least thing independently of Him, that whatever I possess I hold with so absolute a depend-

ence on Him, that should He cease to conserve them in me, I should no longer possess them, so that all He does, or ever will do in me, and all I do or ever will do through His grace, are due to Him as to the true source of all good.

Another means proper to make us practise humility is, to approach God in thought, to consider ourselves in His presence, to measure our being with His, to compare ourselves with Him, for thus shall we clearly see our nothingness in His being, and our littleness in His grandeur. For example, God is so great, that He has made out of nothing and preserves without trouble, this vast universe ; and I am so weak that I cannot produce a blade of grass, or a grain of sand. God knows perfectly and distinctly all that exists and all that is done in the world ; He knows the nature and properties of each thing ; He sees the thoughts of angels and of men, nothing is hidden from His eyes ; and we know scarcely anything. God is so rich that all is in Him, I am so poor that I am absolutely nothing, and if I have anything it is He who gave it to me. It is the same with His other perfections, in presence of which our defects will appear more striking : an ant is a little thing by itself, but it is far less if we compare it to a mountain : the nearer a thing is to a mirror the better it is represented ; the farther it is off, the less perfect will it appear The mirror of the Divinity serves wonderfully to show us to ourselves, according as we approach it more nearly. The patriarch Abraham never had deeper knowledge of his own baseness than when he spoke most familiarly with God, and considered most attentively His greatness. The soul thus enlightened reduces itself to dust and ashes in God's presence ; it plunges and annihilates itself in sentiments of the most profound humility before Him.

Another means of humbling ourselves is to consider the

idea God has of us ; for it must be remarked that, however low our opinion of ourselves is, the opinion God has of us is incomparably lower, because of the infinite perfection of His Divine understanding, which shows Him our nothingness and our misery, makes Him distinguish between what we have of ourselves and what we hold of Him, infinitely better than our poor understanding can. We may then well admit all thoughts calculated to give us the vilest and lowest picture of self, for we are but worms of the earth, a mere sink of corruption ; and we may be sure that God sees us as still more contemptible. If He deign to cast His eyes upon us, it is only because of the gifts with which He has enriched us, for if He regarded us as we are of ourselves, He could not feel anything but contempt for us. We must then desire at least to see ourselves as God sees us, though this our poor blind intellect can never attain in this transitory life.

We should often beg humility of God, which we may do thus : Oh my God, my Lord, I pray and conjure Thee to give me sentiments of the most profound humility. Teach me, O my Divine Master, the great and important lesson Thou didst teach so often by Thy word and example : humility of heart. Banish from my heart all vain glory, *drive far from me all pride.* Make me know in the clearest manner, that of myself I am nothing, I have nothing, I can do nothing. Make me clearly distinguish between what is vile and what is precious, my evils and Thy goods ; open my mind, touch my heart, that I may see and taste how poor, weak and miserable I am ; give me a ray of the infinite knowledge Thou hast of my misery and nothingness, a share in the great contempt Thou hast for what I am of myself, to the end that I may never consent to the least movement of vanity.

Is it possible that being what I am, that having committed so many sins, pride and self-love can enter my

heart? Is it possible that being nothing, possessing nothing but what I hold of the pure liberality of God, I can esteem myself? On what do I ground my self-esteem? Certainly it cannot be on that, the glory of which belongs to God. An earthen vessel is always earthen, though it be filled with precious stones. Adding reproaches to astonishment, we may use the words the Holy Scriptures furnish us with on this subject: *Why art thou proud, Oh dust and ashes?*[1] Where are thy advantages? *Where is thy glory? It is excluded.*[2] *What hast thou* naturally or supernaturally *that thou hast not received* of God? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if *thou hadst not received?*[3]

We may also humble ourselves by the consideration of the examples of the Saints. If saints, the most perfect of human beings, said with sentiments of the most intimate conviction of its truth that they were the greatest sinners in the world, and if, instead of being vain of their virtues and heroic actions, they considered them with humility, what opinion ought I to have of myself, I who am what I am, and live as I live? The highest Cherubim and Seraphim are absorbed before the Divine Majesty in an annihilation so profound that we can have no idea of it: what ought I to do? where ought I to place myself, I who am but a worm of the earth conceived and born in original sin, and sullied with actual sin? If princes evince so much respect before the king, as their duty obliges them to do, ought not a poor villager evince a thousand times more? If I cannot evince as much respect as these noble spirits, at least I ought to humble myself for the blindness and weakness which hinder me from being able to do so. But above all, I must cast my eyes on the King of kings, the Son of God, Our Lord washing the feet of Judas, put in parallel with a murderer, and rejected in that murderer's

[1] Ps. xxxv. 12. [2] Rom. iii. 27. [3] I. Cor. iv. 7.

favor ; conducted through the streets of Jerusalem amid the shouts of an infuriate mob, ignominiously scourged, covered with spittle, a prey to all sorts of opprobrium, dying on a cross between two thieves. What an example for us to see the God of glory and the Lord of all majesty, reduced to this state! After this can we ever sufficiently humble ourselves? Blessed Mary of the Incarnation kissed her crucifix with great respect every time she entered her cell, and she said to the Sisters who surprised her in this holy action : "What shall we say when gazing on so holy an object? Can we ever humble ourselves sufficiently when we see him reduced to this state for us? As for me, I desire no greater favor in this life than to follow my Jesus in the way He has marked out for me, to be vile in my own eyes and in the eyes of others." When Our Lord asked St. John of the Cross what recompense he desired for all his labors, the Saint replied : "Lord, to suffer and be despised for love of Thee."

Regarding our good works, we must practice what has been said above, and repeat before doing them these words of David, which St. Pacomius wished his Religious to have in their mouths continually, in order to stifle all sentiments of vanity ; *It is by God we practise*[1] virtue ; it is he who will aid us to annihilate our enemies. When the action is done, we may say : *The right hand of the Lord has wrought strength, the right hand of the Lord is exalted, the right hand of the Lord has signalized His power.*[2] What is to be done regarding our sins, we have already sufficiently indicated in another section.

Finally exterior humiliations, employments which appear vile are very useful for the acquisition and exercise of humility. Humiliation is the road to humility, says St. Bernard, as patience is the road to peace ;[3] because it disposes the mind to it. Hence, adds the same Saint, if you

[1] Ps. cvii. 14. [2] ibid cxvii. 36. [3] Epist. 87.

desire truly to acquire the virtue of humility, do not fly humiliations, rather embrace them as sure means of obtaining the object of your desires, for they conduct to humility.[1]

II. All good men ought often to form these acts of humility, and to apply themselves with great care to the practice of this virtue, because pride is profoundly rooted in our nature. Three sorts of persons in particular have great need of humility. The first are those endowed with rare qualities of body and mind, which elevate them above others ; for whoever possesses these will naturally feel a secret esteem for himself, a certain complacency not unmixed with vanity and presumption. This caused the ruin of the first Angel ; seeing himself endowed with admirable beauty, the masterpiece of the hand of God, he was puffed up, and so inebriated with his dazzling splendor, that he was lost in the contemplation of it ; it is of him that God says by one of His Prophets ; *Thy heart is inflated because of thy beauty ; thou hast lost wisdom by considering thy excellence.*[2] The second are the rich and powerful of this world, because seeing themselves honored, esteemed and sought after, it is very easy, considering the strong inclination we have to prefer ourselves to others and lord it over them, to do so effectively; it often happens that being elevated in dignity they become haughty, that seeing themseves honored they become vain-glorious. Hence St. Paul wrote to Timothy : *Teach the rich of this world not to be high-minded* ;[3] for they are naturally most prone to pride. Each fruit, each grain, each tree has its particular worm says St. Austin ; the worm of the apple differs from that of the pear ; the worm of wheat is not that of rice ; the worm of riches is pride. The third are learned men, because, as the Apostle says, knowledge puffeth up. And truly, science is the strongest of all temptations to vanity, since it adorns the noblest of our faculties, I mean, the

38 [1] Epist. 87. [2] Ezech. [3] I. Tim. vi. 17.

understanding, drawing it from the darkness of ignorance, to place it in the sublime light of the most beautiful knowledge. It is very easy for a learned man, if he be not on his guard, to become vain : experience shows that it is not very easy to find a man who is very learned and at the same time very humble, who has not too low an opinion of others, who does not censure their own words and actions too freely, who does not interiorly despise them, who is not self-opinionated, who submits cheerfully to the opinions of others ; who willingly receives counsel and correction, who sees that he knows but few things while he is ignorant of many, that his knowledge will turn to his condemnation if he join not to it probity and conscience. These three sorts of persons ought to labor more earnestly to acquire humility of heart, because it is very necessary for them. Let us strive to be faithful to this counsel of the Holy Ghost : *The greater thou art*, the more elevated above others, *the more humble thyself in all things*, and thou shalt find grace before God ; for great is the power of God alone, and He is honored by the humble.[1]

SECTION VIII.

FIRST MOTIVE OF HUMILITY.—THE KNOWLEDGE OF OURSELVES.

I. Importance of this knowledge.—II. Means of acquiring it. Consideration.—III. Our falls and miseries.—IV. A supernatural light.—V. Prayer.

Besides the motives and reasons of which we have already spoken concerning humility, there are others of which we shall speak at greater length. The first is self-knowledge.

I. The famous inscription : *Know thyself*, which was engraved on the front of Apollo's Temple at Delphi, some

[1] Ecclus. iii. 21.

have attributed to Solon, others to Bios, others to Thales; and Juvenal, the Latin satirist, with much more reason, to God Himself, (for he said that this sentence was so beautiful in expression, and so profound in sense, that it could not have come from man, and must therefore have come from heaven,) teaches us that to enter the Temple of God and the sanctuary of wisdom, we must necessarily enter by the door of self-knowledge. One of the greatest perfections of God, to speak according to our weak ideas, and which is the source of numberless others, is that He knows Himself perfectly, both what He is and what He is not; in the same way, one of the greatest perfections of man, the image of God, a perfection which is the source of many others, is to know himself, to know what he is and what he is not. You would be much better, says Hugh of St. Victor, if you know yourself, than if, neglecting yourself, you should lose your time studying the course of the planets, the nature of man, the structure of animals, and all the wonders of heaven and earth; some know many things and know not themselves, though true philosophy consists in self-knowledge. St. Teresa said that whatever degree of prayer the soul attained, she should never cease to consider herself; she added that self-knowledge is the bread we ought to eat in the road of prayer, and that whatever other viands we use, though delicious in themselves, will not sustain us without this bread. Elsewhere she says: "The knowledge of ourselves is a thing of great importance, especially for Religious; I should be well pleased to see you strive after it, even though you were ravished in ecstacy, because while we live here below nothing is more necessary for us than humility." By these words the Saint shows us the good self-knowledge procures us, and that its principal effect is to produce in us humility to the acquisition of which it contributes wonderfully, and of which it is the origin. For, as St. Bernard ob-

serves, if we consider ourselves interiorly with the lamp of truth, the sight of our great poverty and profound misery must humble us and make us vile in our own eyes. A beggar who is covered with rags, whose flesh is eaten away by disgusting ulcers, easily adopts low sentiments of himself, and there is little danger that he will, while in this condition, imagine himself a king.

II. By what means can we acquire this self-knowledge? Chiefly by three. The first is consideration; we cannot know things intuitively like the angels; we must reason, one thing conducts us to another; consideration is the mother of knowledge. To know ourselves, then, we must consider ourselves attentively, we must study and comprehend well that of ourselves we are nothing; that God has drawn us out of nothing, in which we had otherwise remained for all eternity, that the being He gave us we have corrupted by sin, that it is struck in its very origin with the malediction of God, is accompanied with many miseries and defects, that we were conceived and born in sin, that we live in the midst of pains and labors, condemned to death by the irrevocable decree of Divine Justice, that, as we have been formed of dust, so we must return to dust and become the food of worms, that our body is subject to hunger, thirst, cold, weakness and many other infirmities; our eye to blindness, our ear to deafness, our sense of smell to disagreeable odors, our taste to bitterness, our touch, which extends over the whole body, to pain; more ever, we are subject to innumerable maladies, now we are attacked by one, now by another, and thus we are deprived of the little pleasure we could enjoy. As regards our soul, we are subject to still greater evils, because of the violence of our passions, our ignorance, the darkness of our understanding and the disorder of our affections. Farther, we may consider that we are sinners, that there is no man so just that he does not fall daily into many defects; that

we all sin more often than we think ; and if we be not guilty of sins of commission, we are culpable of sins of omission ; for as we do not correspond faithfully to the grace God gives us, we fail in many things. Eliphaz told Job, that God, whose eyes are very different from ours, and who discovers in us defects which we perceive not, *would judge him because of his great malice and the multitude of his iniquities.*[1] St. Thomas remarks on this text that, by *malice*, Eliphaz understands sins of commission and by *iniquities*, sins of omission ; he speaks of their *multitude*, because they are committed more frequently than others. And, even when we are purified of all sins, we do not therefore cease to be sinners, because of our corrupt nature, and the disposition to actual sin, which original sin has left in us. Jurisconsults say in the *Digest*, that persons subject to tertian or quartan ague, or epilepsy, do not enjoy health even when they seem well, because they bear within them the seeds of the disease, which only slumbers ; even so, when we sleep, though we do not actually sin, we cease not to be sinners, because of our inclination to sin, of our corrupt nature which draws us to it, and the secret venom in our members which excites us to evil ; so that in every human being on earth, how holy soever, there will be found these two things : the inclination to evil, and the stains of sin committed. Hence may we justly humble ourselves profoundly, for there is nothing so vile and degrading as sin ; even the smallest sin is a degradation.

III. The second means of knowing ourselves is, to consider our falls, our poverty, our spiritual and corporal miseries, which sad experience daily manifests to us. Astronomers, by considering that the moon changes often in her orbit, that her light sometimes wanes, and is at intervals eclipsed, have concluded that she has no light of herself, but borrows her light from the sun ; so, in contemplat-

[1] Job xxii. 5.

ing our ordinary failings and defects, the imperfections of our understanding and our will, the pain it costs us to subdue our passions, to resist our temptations, to detach ourselves from creatures, and in general to avoid evil and do good, the sins we commit and have committed, convinced by such evident proofs, we ought to acknowledge that we are vile and poor, and that we consequently have great motives to humble ourselves. The holy man Job seated on a dunghill, removing with a potsherd the corrupt matter that oozed from his ulcers, is an image of the Christian, seated on the dung-hill of corrupt nature, and seeing nothing but corruption issuing from all his members ; he ought to say with Job : *What is man?*[1] *I have said to rottenness : thou art my father ; and to the worms ; my mother and my sisters ;*[2] it is from you I have come forth, and to you I must return ; you will always accompany me, you are my parents. If a man through whose frame the deadly fibres of a cancer have spread, should imagine himself sound and healthy, he would thereby show that he was more diseased in mind than in body.

IV. The third means to acquire self-knowledge is the particular light which God communicates to souls when He pleases, and with which He enlightens them, as the divine Sun of Justice. St. Diadocus thus alludes to this means : "Humility is not as easily obtained as some people imagine ; it may, however, be acquired by two means : 1st, by the experience of our miseries, the infirmities of our body and the weaknesses of our soul ; 2nd, by the abundance of lights by which God, by a special favor, sometimes enlightens a soul, elevating it to a solid and excellent humility which afterwards becomes, as it were, natural to that soul. In words few but comprehensive, St. John Climacus speaks of this means when he says : "Humility is a gift which God, dwelling in souls bestows on them, by

[1] Job vii. 17. [2] ibid xvii. 4.

His illustrations and His operations." Now these divine lights show to souls with wonderful clearness, that of themselves they are nothing, have nothing, can do nothing capable of exciting vanity; but that on the contrary, everything that appertains to them ought to humble them profoundly. These are the lights that sometimes break upon the soul and reduce it to dust and ashes. It is of these lights the Royal Prophet speaks when he says: *Thou takest away their* own *mind* by the high knowledge Thy lights give them of themselves; *their* own *mind*, that is to say, according to the explanation of St. Gregory, the spirit of pride to which their nature inclines them. *Thou wilt humble them till they fall into weakness, and return* before Thee *to their dust*, to the dust whence they sprang.

V. These are the three means best calculated to aid us in the acquisition of self-knowledge; but besides these, we must beg it of God, saying with St. Austin: "Lord Jesus grant that I may know Thee and know myself." Frequently and fervently should we make this petition, acknowledging that we are enveloped in thick darkness, and that if we know not a millionth part of what concerns our body, we are still more ignorant of what regards our soul: hence, we must ardently beseech God to give us this knowledge, to show us ourselves, not under the false glare in which self-love too often places us, but with clearness, which will efficaciously excite us to humble and contemn ourselves in His sight.

SECTION IX.

SECOND MOTIVE OF HUMILITY—THE NECESSITY OF GRACE.

I. Without grace we can do nothing meritorious of heaven.—II. Nor practice virtue.—III. It is necessary even for the holiest.—IV. And always.—V. Conclusion.

I. This motive ought to be considered as the foundation of Christian humility; hence we must be penetrated with

it as much as possible. In the natural order, an animal cannot walk without feet, a bird cannot fly without wings ; so in the supernatural order, man cannot go to God without grace ; without grace it is impossible to attain salvation : it is an article of faith that we can do no work meritorious of salvation without the aid of grace. I speak not merely of habitual and sanctifying grace, which purifies us from our sins and makes us children of God, but also of actual grace, that is to say, the lights that illumine our understanding, the sacred affections and touches of the Holy Spirit which excite our will to good, which Our Lord has merited for us by His Life and by His Death. Two kinds of grace are necessary that a man may practice virtue and attain beatitude, says the Angelic Doctor ; the first is habitual grace, by which human nature, sick and corrupted, is healed and made sound, and enabled to perform actions worthy of heaven which no man can do of himself ; the second is actual grace, for this general reason that all creatures depend on their Creator in their operations, and could not even move if they did not receive motion from Him ; so that the inferior movements are subordinate to the motion of heaven, whose first motion directs all that moves in the universe ; during the course of this life, man being plunged in matter which hides from him many things that he should do and avoid in order to work out his salvation, and thus liable to err, he has necessarily need of being enlightened in a special manner by God and conducted by His hand. Moreover as there must be some proportion between the means and the end, that the actions which conduct to the end ought to have some relation to it ; as on one hand, the end of man is eternal life, that is to say the enjoyment of God and the possession of eternal beatitude, which are infinitely above nature, man cannot of himself produce any action proportioned to these great goods, since as philosophy and experience

teach that no agent can produce more than its strength enables it to produce, he must therefore be aided by a power stronger than he : now this power is that of grace, which being supernatural and divine, puts man in a state to merit goods of a supernatural order. We see that water, having of itself no principle of heat, cannot ignite anything ; if we wish to heat anything naturally cold, the power of heating must come from some other source ; so man cannot of himself raise himself to supernatural things, from God he must deserve his power of doing this ; hence His remarkable words which we ought never forget : *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine and you are the branches; he who dwelleth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing.*[1] The custom of the oriental Church, which Cabasillas mentions, insinuates this truth, for when the Priest says at Mass : *Holy things are for the holy,* the faithful respond : There is but One Holy, Jesus Christ, Our Lord, who is the glory of the Father ; because, as this author explains, no one can have sanctity of himself, all sanctity must come to us from Him. When many mirrors are exposed to the sun, though all reflect his light with such splendor that they seem so many suns, yet each owes its sheen and brilliancy to one sun ; so, there is but one Holy who is the glory of the Father, and from whom all the Saints derive their sanctity, I mean Jesus Christ, *of whose plenitude we have all received :*[2] we are rich only through His riches, we are powerful only with his strength, we are holy only because of his sanctity.

Farther, not only are we unable to do anything meritorious, but we cannot even resist the least temptation, or make the least act of an acquired virtue ; that is to say, we can do no good whatever without the continual and

[1] John xv. 4. [2] ibid i. 16.

special assistance of God. Man has of himself only lying and sin, says the Second Council of Orange, if he have any knowledge of the truth which inclines him to good, if he be adorned with any virtue, let him be certain that all flows from the great Fountain of grace, for whose waters we should thirst, that refreshed by them we may not faint on the way. St. Austin thus wrote to Valentinian and his brethren : "I desire that you deny not the necessity of divine grace, and that you deny the proposition that we can, of our own strength, do anything good, or even have a good thought, which is entirely above our strength :" hence Our Lord said to His disciples, speaking of good works : *Without me you can do nothing.* Explaining the same words, the same Doctor says elsewhere, "Our Lord does not say : you can do small things without Me, but *you can do nothing.*" We can therefore do nothing, little or great, without His assistance ; as the branch, that is not united to the vine and nourished by its sap, cannot bear the smallest fruit. Men can do nothing good, whether by thought, word, act or sentiment, without the succor of grace. St. Paul, the oracle of the Church, had said before him : Of *ourselves* we are incapable of forming a good thought, but *all our sufficiency comes from God.*[1] The goodness of our action depends *not on him who willeth, nor on him who runneth, but on the mercy of God.*[2] It is the mercy of God that urges man to will and strengthens him to act, as St. Thomas and St. Augustine remark ; this is why St. Paul said, speaking of himself : *By the grace of God I am what I am ;*[3] but to show that grace does not do all, and that we must co-operate with it, he adds : "I have labored more than all the rest, yet not I, *but the grace of God in me.* The reason of this important truth is, that we cannot do any good work without being urged thereto by a good thought, and a pious affection, which nevertheless are not

[1] II. Cor. iii. 5. [2] Rom. ix. 16. [3] I. Cor. xv. 10.

due to us, since we could, without these good thoughts and affections, and even with bad thoughts, preserve the quality of man and the possession of all the natural goods which are gifts of creation ; but Jesus Christ has merited for us these good thoughts, and these pious affections, from His Father, by the labors of His life and death. Hence the Council of Orange[1] declares that it is a particular gift of God when we have a good thought. Pope Celestine says the same in these terms : "God works in the hearts of men, and in their free will in such a manner that every holy thought, every design tending to good, every movement of the will which excites us to virtue, comes from Him by whom we do all the good we do, and without whom we can do nothing." Even Seneca seems to have had some insight into this truth when he wrote to his friend Lucilius, "No good mind can form a good thought without the help of God." Before him Aristotle, in his *Morals*, had established this principle, when he said that the commencement of a good design, he meant a good thought, comes from good fortune, that is, from God, according to the interpretation of St. Thomas ; he says, moreover, that the principle of good reasoning is not reason, but something superior to reason, that is to say God. Besides, the least virtuous action of man in whatever state he may be, has always some force to acquire eternal life ; for if he have sanctifying grace, the act has the force of just merit ; if he be in mortal sin, the act disposes to merit, because by this means man strikes the ears of God's mercy, invites His bounty to stretch out a succoring hand to draw him from sin, reset him in the way of salvation, and enable him to obtain the eternal beatitude for which he was created ; whence it may be concluded that each good action, however small, has always something divine and su-

[1] This Council combatted the Pelagians who confounded all with the gift of creation.

pernatural, because it contains a hidden virtue, a secret germ of that which renders man worthy of eternal life, or disposes him to become worthy of it; which all the power of human nature cannot accomplish.

Thus grace is necessary to man to work out his salvation, to resist temptations, to perform good works; and this is to be understood with reference to all men, without a single exception; for, as St. Austin elegantly says, the eye, however sound and piercing, can see only by means of light, so man, however elevated his perfection, can live holily only when enlightened by the rays of the eternal Sun of justice. Though man's will and understanding should tend to heaven, he could not attain it of himself; he cannot exercise any virtue, form a good thought, unless the breath of the Holy Spirit excite him and give him the first impulse; without this he must always grovel on earth and be earthly.

III. Grace is so necessary to all, even the most holy, in order to avoid evil and do good, that God always sees millions of bad thoughts, of depraved sentiments and temptations which might assail us without changing our nature or robbing it of its rights. God sees that each of these thoughts, if He permitted us to be assailed by it in all its fury, would cause us to consent to sin, that at any moment, if He allowed the demon to attack us according to his whole power, we should commit horrible crimes, and even abandon our vocation, if we be religious, renounce our Baptism, quit the Catholic Church, become heretics and even atheists, than which man can fall no lower. Grace alone preserves us from this, *His mercy preventeth us*,[1] says David: we could do all without losing the quality of man, and experience proves that some have unfortunately done so; our deliverance, then, comes from grace. We are suspended over the abyss of all sins, by the thread of

[1] Ps. lviii. 11.

grace, if I may so speak ; without it we should fall by our own weight ; there is no wickedness, no abomination which we should not be liable to commit : grace does in our souls, to hinder them from gravitating to the corruption of vice, what salt does in dead flesh to hinder it from falling into a state of putrefaction.

IV. Moreover, the length of time passed in the exercise of good works, extraordinary favors, sublime knowledge, inflamed affections, good habits painfully acquired by many years' perseverance, do not render man independent of grace. Though the air is the medium through which light has been transmitted since the creation of the world, it has not acquired the power of being luminous itself, but has as much need of the sunlight to-day as it had in the beginning. Our bodies can no more live without our souls after a lapse of eighty years than they could at the first instant of life ; because the body has not life of itself, nor the air light ; and hence they are equally powerless, the one to vivify, the other to enlighten. Though a man should, with the assistance of grace, have lived for a long period in the perfect observance of the commandments of God, and the practice of heroic virtue ; though he should have gained glorious victories over his many enemies and attained the highest sanctity he can reach, he is not therefore capable of producing by himself the least good work, of vanquishing the slightest temptation ; grace is still necessary to him, and will always be necessary till he shall have closed his eyes in death. Experience daily shows this : do we not see that at particular times a little thing gives pain to a virtuous man, which at other times he would only laugh at, God so permitting it ; that sometimes a vain illusion of the imagination, a foolish apprehension, a mere nothing, will weary and annoy a heart full of resolution, and which heretofore bore up courageously under very heavy crosses ; as the crowing of the cock frightens the

lion, the most courageous of animals, the king of beasts. Sire de Joinville relates that St. Louis was on the point of being shipwrecked near the Isle of Cyprus, his ship having been dashed against a rock by a slight wind which had inspired no fear, and the sailors began to weep and tear their garments, imagining they were lost. The holy King, rising from his couch, wrapped his mantle about him and stretching out his arms in the form of a cross, prostrated himself before the Precious Body of Our Lord, expecting only death ; and immediately the storm was appeased. Next day he called Sire de Joinville and said : "Seneschel,[1] God showed us yesterday an instance of His great power, for one of these little winds of which we hardly know the name, was near drowning the King of France, his Queen and their children." St. Auselm remarks that occurrences of this kind are threats of Our Lord, as though He should say to us on a similar occasion : See, if I had permitted it, you should all be drowned. When a little accident, a light affliction troubles and disquiets us, we ought to learn by the pain it causes our weakness, that God seems then to say to us : See to what you are reduced, if I permitted you to be attacked, by your most powerful enemies, what would become of you since these trifles torment you so much : if then you have overcome in greater things, you owe your victories not to the power of your own arm, but to the force of My grace. *If God had not assisted me,* said David, *my soul had dwelt in hell,*[2] or as others translate it, my soul had become the prey of its enemies.

We also experience, that a truth which profoundly affects us one day, makes no impression on us another day ; that the line of argument which convinces us to-day, will seem untenable to-morrow. Souls, even the most enlightened and cherished by God, are sometimes reduced to so

[1] Joinville was Seneschel of Champagne. [2] Ps.

pitiable a condition, that, as mystic theologians say, and St. Teresa recounts of herself, they often lose even the remembrance of the lights by which He had shown them so many beautiful truths, of the affections which had moved them so sensibly, of the ardors which had so powerfully inflamed them, of all the great gifts they had received: they realize only that a thick foggy darkness shrouds them, they seem to have grown hard as rocks after having been flexible as wax; they are wholly disconcerted in their interior operations, they find it extremely difficult to make their memory, will and understanding act: it is the presence or absence of grace that causes these different changes: when the stream that supplies a fountain is turned off in an other direction, the fountain dries up. David, who had said when his soul abounded in grace: *I shall never be moved*, exclaimed when grace was withdrawn: *I am filled with trouble.* Some people say they would be greatly affected if they witnessed some miracles, the sight would suffice to convert them, they would ever after live well: this is an egregious error. What among the miracles of Jesus Christ can be considered more splendid than the resuscitation of Lazarus? The Jews who witnessed it were filled with admiration; yet they did not become better thereby, for a little while after they seized Our Lord and crucified Him. Can we imagine anything more strange than the insensibility of those who went to the garden of Olives to capture Him? They saw that with two words He had cast them on the ground, and that they could not rise without His permission; they saw the admirable bounty with which He healed the servant whose ear Peter had cut off; yet they persevered in their evil design, they seized Him, they bound Him, they led Him forth as a criminal. All exterior things can produce no effect, if grace do not operate interiorly; it is useless for

[1] Ps.

the physical eye to see great prodigies if the Sun of Justice do not enlighten the eyes of the soul. The thief hanging on the Cross acknowledged Jesus in the midst of His opprobrium, and others despised Him even when they saw Him work miracles, as St. Austin well observes.

V. We ought to learn from our continual need of grace, to perform all sorts of good works; 1st, that it is for us a great subject of humiliation before God, and well calculated to prevent our being inflated by our virtuous actions, that of ourselves we cannot perform the smallest. They are all fruits of His grace which aids our free will; 2nd, that to succeed in the business of our salvation, we must continually beg grace of God; saying with the ancient Fathers, and with St. Catharine of Sienna, these words of David, which she and they so often repeated, and which the Church makes us say so frequently in the Divine Office: Incline unto my aid, Oh God; Oh Lord make haste to help me.[1] Never cease to repeat these words, says Cassian; have them in your mouth whatever you do, let sleep surprise you revolving them in your mind, till they become so habitual that even in your sleep they will naturally come to your lips; let them be your first words on awaking, your first thought, your first prayer, let them accompany you through all the exercises of the day. 3rd. Never scorn those who fall, nor speak disdainfully to sinners, but rather have compassion on them, remembering that if you are standing to-day and they fallen, it is not because you are stronger than they, but because you are better sustained; that which has happened to them to-day will happen to you to-morrow, if God do not assist you.

Let no one regard himself courageous, even when he does most courageous actions, says St. Gregory, for if the arm of the Omnipotent abandon him, he will inevitably fall,

[1] Ps. xcvi. 7.

and his fall will appear more cowardly in proportion as he thinks himself courageous. Since we depend so utterly, so absolutely on grace, that without it the greatest Saint would become the greatest sinner, and with it the greatest sinner would soon become a great Saint, we ought to be careful how we condemn others, for as the Holy Ghost says : *It is easy for God to enrich the poor in a short time* ;[1] His grace can speedily change the sinner into a Saint.

We are in the hands of God like a certain token in the hands of a merchant, who in one calculation uses it to represent millions of livres, and in another to represent farthings. Speaking of predestination under the figure of the earth, God said to Job : Tell me if thou knowest it, *who hath measured the earth, or who hath stretched the line upon it ?*[2] He meant to say that as measures, limits and ends are used to divide lands, so He divides His graces among men, and distributes them as the celestial heritage His Son purchased for them ; but this division is so hidden that our minds cannot fathom it ; some seem to have a great share, some but little, while others seem to have been excluded from the inheritance. St. Gregory remarks on this text : " God speaks thus to this holy man, to the end that he may consider more attentively the abyss of the councils of God, that he may see how the salvation of man is not in his own hands, but in the hands of his Creator, that in view of this he may attribute nothing to his own strength, that far from being presumptuous, he may live in just fear of the profound judgments of God, that he may not prefer himself to others, and that seeing as he must that grace is measured out in a manner so incomprehensible to us, he may ground himself as much as possible on humble fear, and acknowledge that all is in the power of this Sovereign Regulator by whose grace we are enabled to live well and die happily.

[1] Eccl. xi. 23. [2] Job xxxviii. 5.

SECTION X.

THIRD MOTIVE—EXCELLENCE OF HUMILITY.

I. Humility is the foundation of the spiritual life.—II. The guardian of virtues.—III. The sign of predestination.—IV. It disposes the soul to receive grace.—V. It enlightens the understanding.—VI. It gives peace to the will.—VII. It elevates to glory.—VIII. Conclusion.

Every wise man will imprint on his heart a great love for humility, and ardently desire to practice its acts, if he weigh well and attentively the perfection and excellence of this virtue.

I. It is the foundation of the spiritual edifice, the basis on which all other virtues ought to rest. It is the solid and firm base of all virtues, says St. Bernard ; and if this foundation give way, the rest of the virtues will soon follow it. Speaking of the birth of Our Lord, St. Cyprian enunciates these remarkable words ; "The first step in the religious career, as the first Our Lord made in this world, consists in this, that whoever desires to lead a virtuous life must have a low opinion of himself, and repress all proud and vain thoughts." The foundation of sanctity is humility, pride is not permitted even in heaven. The first of the beatitudes, which collectively include the perfection of Christianity, is *poverty of spirit ;* that is, as most of the Fathers interpret it, humility. Now humility is the foundation of all virtues because it precedes them all, and disposes the soul for their reception.

For, 1st, though faith be called by the Doctors the foundation of the spiritual edifice, and though St. Paul says it is faith which conducts us to God, yet humility must precede faith, for faith is not in the proud but in the humble, as St. Austin remarks. St. Thomas says : "If faith is, as cannot be doubted, the foundation stone of the interior edifice of the soul, in which God wishes to dwell, it is hu-

mility that digs the foundation, takes away all the moving sand of self-opinionatedness and self-esteem." 2nd. It cannot be doubted that humility must precede the other virtues, since no one can possess them unless humility excite him to judge himself unworthy of them ; if he do not regard them as gifts of God and celestial riches which he could not acquire by his own strength, but by the help of grace. 3rd. Humility is directly opposed to pride, which the Holy Scripture calls the begining of all sin ; because all sin takes its source in the rebellion of the sinner who wishes to do his own will instead of the will of God ; for the opposite reason humility is the source of all virtues, because it submits the soul to God and does His will in all things.

Since humility holds the first rank in the spiritual edifice, and since the wise man, as Our Lord teaches, builds his house on a rock, that the winds and rains may be powerless against it ; we ought then, if we have our salvation at heart, have the highest esteem for this virtue, and ground all our pious exercises on it. To this St. Chrysostom exhorts us by the following words : "If your alms, your prayers, your fasts, and all your good works, have not humility for their basis, you labor in vain." The higher the edifice you plan, says St. Austin, the deeper must you dig the foundation. Do you wish to build a very high edifice of perfection? Cast, then, very deep foundations of humility. Thus when Our Lord wishes to draw some soul to Himself in a particular manner, and elevate it to high perfection, He always begins by bestowing great lights to teach that soul self-knowledge, to ground it solidly in humility, as we have seen by St. Catharine of Sienna, St. Teresa, St. Angela Foligno. One of these souls He one day conducted to the brink of an abyss in which the creature saw clearly its own nothingness ; He then said : Remain there and I will seek thee ; elsewhere

I shall not seek thee. To another person he recommended these things as most important, and repeated several times : Speak little, refrain thyself from vanity and false liberty.

II. Humility is the guardian of virtues ; it holds them and will not let them fly away ; hence St. Basil calls it the treasury in which they are preserved. And, as St. Gregory observes, he who gathers virtues without humility, resembles one who casts dust before the wind. Humility secures the other virtues, and is itself the most secure of all ; there is no other virtue which the devil cannot counterfeit ; he mingles in fasts, prayers, bodily macerations, acts of love ; he transforms himself into an angel of light, he causes man to take the shadow for the reality, lying for truth, but humility is shielded from these illusions and deceits, for it is so opposed to the demon because of his pride that he dare not approach it or descend to it. One day St. Anthony saw the whole world covered with snares which the devil had laid, so that it seemed impossible to him to set his feet anywhere without becoming entangled in them : greatly terrified he exclaimed ; "Alas, my God who can escape these snares? And immediately a voice answered ; *Humility can escape them, Anthony*, humility delivers a man from all danger. Whoever lies on the ground cannot fall, but if he be raised above it ever so little, he may fall and be hurt. Humility is the touchstone of the other virtues, it proves whether they are solid or not, especially when there is question of extraordinary ways, because in them there is greater obscurity and greater liability to illusion, and in fact, humility is the chief if not the only test we can apply to them, as Our Lord declared Himself to Blessed Angela Foligno and others. We must always consider whether the person conducted by these ways have true submission of mind, if she be detached from her own will and judgment, if she seek to be un-

known, if she embrace contradictions and love opprobrium, because these are all effects of the Spirit of God ; in elevating a soul He abases and humbles it simultaneously.

III. Humility is, morally speaking, a certain mark of predestination. St. Gregory[1] explaining these words which God said to Job of the Leviathan which, according to most interpreters, represents the demon : *He beholdeth every high thing;* he is king over the *children of pride;* says that pride is the proper character of the reprobate, and humility of the elect. He shows that there is an extreme difference between Our Lord and the demon, because the latter has been proud from the beginning and sought by all means to elevate himself, even above God ; while from His conception till His death, Our Lord was ever humble and gave Himself up to the most prodigious humiliations. 2nd. He adds that though the devil is now punished in hell for his pride, he retains nevertheless his ambitious and haughty nature, he seeks as far as possible to induce men to imitate him, teaching them as he taught Adam, to tend always to what is too high for them, to desire honors and dignities, to raise themselves above others, to hide their defects or excuse them, and even to revolt against God Himself. Behold the thoughts and sentiments the demon suggests to men. Our Lord, on the contrary, being perfectly humble, imprints opposite sentiments : a humble heart, a spirit of abasement and self contempt; candor in confessing our faults, esteem for our neighbor, a desire to prefer others to self, an entire submission to God. Whence the holy Doctor concludes that since the demon communicates to men the spirit of pride which is proper to him, Our Lord gives them the spirit of humility, and therefore it is clear that pride is the mark of the reprobate, as humility is of the predestined.

Hence the elect are called in Scripture the *poor of God,*

[1] *Moral.* 34 lib. cap. 21.

that is, according to St. Austin, the humble who are poor because of the low opinion they have of themselves, and because they think they have nothing. Our Lord said to His disciples who represented this blessed troop : *fear not little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a Kingdom*[1]. He calls them little flock, says Venerable Bede, not so much because of the paucity of their number, as because of their humility, by means of which virtue He willed that His Church should increase to the end of the world and come to the promised Kingdom, to glory everlasting.

But why is humility the sign of the elect, and why is pride the sign of the reprobate? I answer, that it is because God takes a particular pleasure in this virtue and detests pride more than any other vice. *Pride is odious to God and man*[2], says the Holy Ghost ; it is hateful to God, because it directly attacks what is most dear to Him, that is, His glory ; and hence He thus describes the proud, in the book of Job ; *He has stretched out his hand against God, he believes himself mighty enough to combat the* Omnipotent, *he has run against Him with uplifted head, he is armed with inflexible pride.*[3] Other vices attack the neighbor, or the sinner himself, but pride directly attacks God. Hence Our Lord, according to the remark of St. Peter Chrysologus, says, speaking of hypocrites and the proud, that they publish their works with a trumpet, which is an instrument of war, as if to declare war against God : this is why Our Lord so strongly reprobated this vice : *God resists the proud*,[4] says St. James, because to avenge the outrage done to His Majesty, He undertakes a particular combat against pride, as St. Ambrose remarks, and He seems to say : Behold My special enemy who designs to attack Me on My throne, and rob Me of My glory, it is for Me to combat him since he attacks Me. So God never acts with greater fury than when He punishes the proud, as we see by the

[1] Luke xii. 32. [2] Ecclus. x. 7. [3] Job. xv. 25. [4] James iv. 6.

example of the rebel angels, of our first parents, of Nabuchodonosor, of Antiochus and others; He despoils them of all he had given them, He covers them with confusion, He vilifies them to the last degree, saying to them, with far greater reason, what the Emperor John Zimisces said to the Patriarch of Constantinople whom he had raised to the patriarchate, and who nevertheless opposed his designs: It is I, vile wretch, who have made thee, but I will destroy thee; if I have given thee goods, I can strip thee of them. Moreover, God particularly hates pride, because in effect there is nothing that renders a man more worthy of hatred. *Three things My soul hateth*, says God by the mouth of the Sage, I know not how to bear with them; and He puts in the first rank, a man that is *poor and proud*.[1] And indeed, nothing is more odious than a pauper who is proud; it is easier to tolerate a robber, a glutton, or the victim of any other vice; so the anger of God cannot restrain itself when He sees a man that has nothing, who of himself is more wretched than the last of beggars, self-sufficient and vain-glorious. If pride so strongly displeases God, humility without doubt is, for contrary reasons, most agreeable to Him who loves truth.

IV. Humility, by voiding the soul of self-esteem, disposes it for the graces of God, and God, finding it empty, fills it with His gifts; while pride renders the soul wholly incapable of receiving grace, because God will not communicate it to a proud soul that would take up arms against Him. The waters of heaven rest not on the summits of mountains, says St. Austin, but they water and fertilize valleys; so the favors and benedictions of God rest not on proud souls, but descend to the humble. Make with fear and trembling, that is, with humility, a valley to receive these rains, for low places are easily watered, while high places are exposed to aridity. Be not surprised that God

[1] Eccius. xxv. 2.

says *He resists the proud and gives His grace to the humble.* "Avoid pride that you may not be exposed to this aridity, be humble that you may be moistened by the sacred showers of grace." And since there is no virtue which more advantageously disposes a soul to receive the graces of God than humility, which gives it a greater capacity of receiving them in abundance, because it is capacious in proportion as it is empty of self, we cannot doubt that an humble soul will be replenished with treasures of perfection, since it is full of God who loves to abide in it.

But above all, humility is extremely potent to acquire and preserve chastity, while pride is one of the most common dispositions to the opposite vice. Pride has been the source of many infamous actions, says St. Gregory, because while pride elevates the mind, passion brings down the body. The proud deserve this chastisement; since their presumption inclines them to prefer themselves to men, it is just that they should become like beasts. Thus it sometimes happens that a continence which had withstood many a temptation; virginity well kept in youth during the heat of the passions, is lost in old age, when the flesh is already nearly dead, and the blood frozen in the veins. "They are possessed by the spirit of fornication; the fire of concupiscence is re-kindled in their hearts . . . if they ask why, *their arrogance*[1] will tell them it is the cause: they nourish secret self-esteem, they take complacency in the talents and perfections God has given them, they are vain-glorious. St. Paul says that God, seeing the Pagan philosophers inflated with pride and self-esteem, delivered them *to the desires of their hearts*, to uncleanness, so that they dishonored even their own bodies,[2] because nothing so degrades a man as this shameful vice; as nothing makes an elegantly dressed man feel more confusion than to fall into mud and ordure, and thus appear with

[1] Osee v. 4. [2] Rom. i. 24.

his magnificent garments sullied and their beauty changed into ugliness. The same Apostle was tormented by *an angel of Satan*, as he himself writes, that is, by a sting of the flesh, to hinder him from being puffed up because of the greatness of his revelations and the sublime knowledge he had acquired in his ecstacy. This monitor was given St. Paul, remarks St. Jerome, to remind him that he must repress pride, as a monitor was given in Rome to whoever was about to receive the honors of a triumph, who ceased not to repeat: *Remember that thou art a man.* To have a pure body, concludes St. Gregory, we must have a soul exempt from pride; humility is the guardian of chastity, for chastity cannot be preserved without it.

V. Humility enlightens the understanding and replenishes it with divine light, while pride obscures and blinds it. *Where humility* is, says the Holy Ghost, *there is wisdom*,[1] but pride is always accompanied with opprobrium, because pride is inseparable from ignorance of self, hence St. John Climacus judiciously describes pride as being acephalous, that is, without a head. The swelling of the mind, says St. Gregory, is an obstacle to truth, because it clouds the mental eyes, as the swelling of the face closes the bodily eyes. The same Father says, interpreting these words of Job: He has hidden His light to the proud;[2] It is to them that God refuses the light of truth. His celestial rays burst not on their soul, they are enveloped in perpetual darkness.[3] Truth itself, clothed with our flesh, has said with His own mouth: I give Thee glory, Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden *these things*, the knowledge of Thy mysteries, *from the wise and prudent*, inflated with self-esteem, *and hast revealed them to little ones;* yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight. Speaking of the shepherds to whom the Angel announced the birth of the Saviour of the world, St. Cy-

[1] Prov. xi. 2. [2] Job. xxxvi. 32. [3] Moral Lib. 27. cap. 7.

prian says: Simple persons were chosen to be among the first adorers of the new-born King, in order to lay down this rule, which has no exception, that the Incarnate Word discovers Himself only to the humble, and that truth will not even let itself be seen by the proud. God takes pleasure in conversing familiarly *with the simple*,[1] showing Himself to little ones, and according to the force of the Hebrew text, discovering to them His secrets. Hence those who apply themselves to prayer, should, above all, attach themselves to humility, to fit their souls for receiving the lights of God; otherwise their lights will be illusions and conduct them to a precipice into which they will be dashed.

VI. Humility fills the will with perpetual repose, and makes it enjoy delicious peace. If you see or hear that any one has attained in a short time great tranquility of mind, says St. John Climacus, be certain that he reached it by the short and pleasant path of humility. The pious Rusbrocius in his treatise on the spiritual life, the whole secret of which he places in humility, says, that he knows no way more short, more direct, or more sure of arriving at the highest degree of charity and the summit of perfection; he adds that it is an inestimable treasure, a precious gift, driving far from us all sadness, and grounding us in solid peace and ineffable content, which can come from no other source. And I fear not to say that, when we bear affliction impatiently, it is because we are wanting in humility, for the humble man knowing that his sins render him unworthy of the benefits of God, and deserving only of His anger and the contempt of all creatures, does not think his trials too great, since he sees that they are less than he merits: whatever injury is done him, he never complains; he thinks he is treated very mercifully. He does not resist the will of God, but yields to Him in every-

[1] Prov. iii. 32.

thing, and all our trouble comes from this resistance ; thus he enjoys profound peace : such are the words of the holy Doctor. And, in fact, a thing must be in repose when it is where nature intended it to be : the humble man is in his natural place, that is, in his nothingness ; he can experience no inquietude ; while the proud man must be always agitated, because he is not in his own place. Our Lord teaches us this truth by these celebrated words : Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart, *and you will find rest to your souls ;*[1] it is by imitating *Me* you must seek peace, otherwise you will never find it. Perfect and immutable peace is found only in heaven, among the Blessed, in the Paradise of glory, and the nearest approach to it is found on earth in humble souls, who live in the paradise of grace. If we go to the source of all the troubles, sadness and chagrins we experience, we shall see that they come from self-esteem, from a desire to lord it over others, from fear of being despised, etc. Take away pride, and the human heart is shielded from all disturbance and agitation.

VII. Humility is the ladder which conducts to glory, and to the most elevated thrones. To imprint on our hearts a love and esteem for this virtue, the Holy Scripture often repeats this truth : God raises the humble to thrones, says Job. The valleys shall be filled up and the mountains and hills shall be brought low,[2] says St. John the Baptist. Baruch had said before them, in the same sentiment : The Lord hath resolved to humble the mountains, and the rocks that seem to be eternal, and to fill the valleys by raising them to the earth.[3] He hath deposed the mighty from his seat and hath exalted the humble, says Mary in her canticle. We see in Daniel, that God, after having deposed the haughty Nabuchodonosor and reduced him to the condition of beasts, ELEVATED *the humblest of men,*[4]

[1] Matt. xi. 29. [2] Luke iii. 5. [3] Baruch v. 7. [4] Dan. iv. 14.

that is to say, according to the interpretation of the Doctors, either the Word Incarnate to whom He has given all power in heaven and on earth, or the same Nabuchodonosor become humble by his fall and his abasements. I omit other texts of Scripture, in order to come the more speedily to these words of Our Lord, which He repeated on three different occasions to imprint them the more profoundly on our hearts: *Whoever exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* You have heard the decree come forth from the mouth of the Son of God, says St. Austin, be then on your guard against pride; I add: And love humility; for what is threatened of pride and promised of humility will surely be executed. St. Peter Damian relates that a haughty ecclesiastic, who handled his sword much more than he handled his Breviary, unjustly sought to appropriate to himself a very rich benifice; the patron, who was a lord of quality, opposed him, but the other refusing to yield, they resolved to settle the affair by a duel. The day of combat arrived; the lord sent a spy to see what his enemy was doing, who on his return said that he had found him hearing Mass, and that at the end of the Gospel, which contained these words, "He who exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," he had said aloud: "These words are not true, because if I had humbled myself I should be despoiled of all the honors and dignities I possess." The gentleman from this augured favorably for his own cause, and his hope was realized, for he pierced with the first blow of his sword the sacriligious mouth and blasphemous tongue of the impious man, who immediately fell dead. These words, then, are true and infallible. Humility is the merit of honor, says St. Austin, and honor is the reward of humility. Humble yourself and you shall be exalted. And this is so, not only for the future life, but even for the present life, in which God by

secret ways often elevates those who humble themselves for Him. And even though He should not do so here, it is always true that humiliation received in a proper spirit elevates us before God, and when we abase ourselves here below we are esteemed in heaven: abasement and elevation are as two scales of a balance, says St. Thomas; when the one is lowered the other is elevated, and the depression of one is the raising of the other. To establish this truth, let us consider some of the examples which have been given of Our Lord, of the Holy Virgin, of the Angels, of St. John the Baptist. St. Paul, says of Our Lord: He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross; for which cause God hath exalted Him and given Him a name which is above all names, that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell.[1] St. Bernard says of the Holy Virgin: "Her virginal purity made her pleasing to God, but by her humility she deserved, as far as she could, to become His Mother." By her profound abasement before the Divine Majesty, she attracted Him to her womb, there to operate the greatest of all prodigies, and to raise her to the highest degree of glory that a creature can attain. The divine Maternity was due to the most profound humility, and if there were a daughter of Juda more humble than Mary, Mary would have been deprived of it. O, humility, admirable virtue, how great thou art in thy abasement, how strong in thy impotence! As pride precipitated the bad Angels from their glorious thrones to the region of everlasting horror, so humility secured the good Angels in their blessedness. St. John Baptist told the Jews whom the reputation of his sanctity had attracted to him, that he was not the Messiah, that he was only a voice; and Our Lord honored him by the most illustrious testimony ever rendered to the virtue of man,

[1] Phil. ii. 8.

saying that he was the greatest among the children of men. The same Saint said that he was not worthy to untie the latchet of Our Lord's shoe, and Our Lord wills to be baptised by him ; the hand which St. John did not think worthy to loose His shoe, is employed to pour water on his head : thus is accomplished the oracle of the Son of God : He that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Humble yourself then, if you wish God to exalt you.

Now, as all men naturally desire glory, and wish to be elevated, because, as St. Bernard says, giving the reason of this, we are noble and excellent creatures, endowed with a great heart ; we ought to practice humility, since it is the sure way to honor. Some attain earthly glory by their intellect, some by their riches ; this one by his friends, that one by his valor ; but the means of arriving at true and solid glory is humility. Humble yourself, says St. Bernard, and glory is yours. This law is full of sweetness ; my mind cannot refuse to submit to it, for nothing is easier to the man of good will than to humble himself : this law does not leave us the slightest excuse capable of screening us, if we fail to observe it. O, deplorable blindness and perversity of the children of Adam ! though it be naturally difficult to ascend and easy to descend, yet we ascend with incredible facility, and descend only with pain. Since we are so eager for greatness, and since humility is the sure and easy road to it, let us not hesitate to take it, and let us beware of quitting it. Our Lord has taught us this way, and He cannot deceive us ; all the just have trod this path. The just strive by humility to attain glory, says St. Austin ; the wicked in striving to elevate themselves fall into the abyss ; the first stoop to elevate themselves, the second elevate themselves to fall from their elevation.

VIII. I shall add three things to what has been already said on the excellence of humility, that we may see this more clearly. 1st. Among other things in praise of hu-

mility, St. John Climacus says : It is a virtue which ornaments the soul to an extent that cannot be described ; it can be known only by those who have the happiness of possessing it ; it is an inestimable treasure which contains untold riches ; humility calms the mind, and in heaven will elevate its possessor to the highest degree of glory. A certain soul ravished with its beauty once addressed it thus : Humility, what is thy father's name? And the answer given with a smile, in a sweet, pleasing voice, was : Why desire to learn the name of my father? He has none. When you shall be in the possession of God, then you shall understand it ; as the sea is the mother of fountains, so is humility the mother of discretion, and of all virtues.

2. Writing to Dioscorus, St. Austin uses these remarkable words : Submit your heart to the ways of Jesus Christ, my dear friend, and open it to truth : we have no other means than that which Jesus Christ has marked. The first thing is humility, the second is humility, the third is humility. As often as you question me, I shall answer you the same. It is not that we have not other virtues to acquire, but this virtue is so necessary that it ought to precede, accompany and follow all our actions, lest before doing them we should propose the esteem of men as our end, or that in doing them we should lean on our own strength instead of leaning on divine grace, or that after we accomplish them, we should glorify ourselves instead of God, and pride should rob us of all the merit we could hope for. When Demosthenes was asked what he considered the principal part of oratory, he replied : pronunciation, and the next in importance, pronunciation; and the next, pronunciation ; so, as often as you ask me what is the most important virtue of the Christian Religion, I shall always answer, humility, even though necessity should force me to specify some others.

3. When the Apostles disputed among themselves who

should become the greatest, Jesus, to terminate the contest, *having called a little child*, set him in the midst of them and said: Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven Whoever shall *humble himself* like this little child, *shall be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.* We ought to consider in this text many remarkable circumstances: 1st. Our Lord puts this little child in the midst of the Apostles; the child forms, as it were, the centre, and the Apostles the circle, to signify that as the centre is the foundation of the circle which is the most perfect figure, so humility is the commencement and origin of perfection: moreover, as all the lines of a circle go from the centre to the circumference, and from the circumference to the centre, which unites and retains them all; so all virtues ought to be born of humility and return to it, that they may be preserved. This child was put in the midst of Apostles, because it is a better thing to be humble than to be an Apostle, for the humble man can save himself without the dignity of the apostleship, and the apostle would be damned without the virtue of humility. But to proceed: 2nd. *If you be not converted*, if you do not cease this contest, if you do not become humble, you shall not enter the kingdom of *heaven*: Jesus Christ thus shows the absolute necessity of humility for salvation. 3rd. He teaches us that our humility is in some manner the measure of our future glory when He says: Whoever humbles himself like this little child, shall be *the greatest in the kingdom of heaven;* the highest places in heaven are reserved for those who shall have been the most humble in this life. 4th. Jesus Christ caresses this child: St. Mark says that He not only placed him in the midst of them, but *embraced him;* to show that He communicates Himself with sweet familiarity to the humble, that He cherishes them, that He gives them special tokens of His love. He raised this child from the ground, ca-

ressed him, pressed him to His Heart; so He raises the humble above earthly things by the contempt He makes them feel for these nothings, He cherishes them, He unites them intimately to Himself. Happy virtue which obtains even in this life so many blessings and favors, and which enjoys already a foretaste of future bliss!

SECTION XI.

FOURTH MOTIVE — THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST; THE LOVE WE OWE HIM.

I. Humility of Jesus Christ.—II. He desires that we should imitate it.—III. Love should excite us to this imitation.

I. This motive will animate the souls of those who really love Our Lord, and will have great power over all true Christians.

It is as clear as the day that Our Lord was sovereignly humble, that He abandoned Himself to greater abasements than it is possible for us to conceive; hence Isaiah called Him, *the last of men*, because He humbled Himself more than all men together can ever do; but let us seek to penetrate this mystery a little. There are in Our Lord three principal things, His Divinity, His Holy Soul and His Sacred Body. 1st. In His Divinity He humbled Himself to such an excess that His humility will excite the admiration of the Blessed for all eternity, and it may be said that He alone could really humble Himself, since He alone is great by essence. When a mere man humbles himself, he only enters his natural state; however great his abasement, he can never descend to the nothingness from which he was drawn. Whatever injury or outrage he may receive from creatures, though he be condemned to the greatest infamy that can be endured in this life, it is not enough to satisfy

for the least of his venial sins; it deserves more, since it deserves purgatory. Now the Divinity is infinitely humbled in Our Lord, by being united to our nature, and with a union so inseparable that God has become man, and man God. The Word is made flesh. He emptied Himself. He is made the son of Adam, of a sinner: is not this to abase His infinite grandeur, to rob His Sovereign Majesty of its splendor, to plunge His glory in the dust? Yet more, we can see a God on His knees before Judas, washing and kissing his feet, a God compared to Barabbas and reputed the more infamous of the two, a God attached to a cross by the hands of murderers, placed between two thieves as the most guilty—was ever humility comparable to this?

2nd. The soul of Our Lord was, in the first moments of its creation, and will be for all eternity, the most humble of all creatures, rendering to God the most perfect submission, the most profound respect, the most excellent adorations, the greatest homages, the most ardent thanksgiving, the most faithful in referring to Him the glory of its perfections and its works, because it knew in an incomparably perfect manner, and with light which no other creature can attain, what it is in itself, and what it is by the goodness of God; that of itself it is nothing, that all it possesses comes from the liberality of God, and that it has continual need of His assistance for its conservation, since only its Creator can sustain it.

3rd. As regards His Sacred Body and exterior things, Our Lord could not be more profoundly humbled. A Prince by birth, son of David, legitimate heir to his crown, He willed to be born in the vilest place, in a wretched stable. He passed His infancy, His youth, and the greatest part of His life in the most common functions, His Divine hands handled the saw, and worked at Joseph's humble trade. He earned his daily bread like a simple artisan. He was humbly clad, poorly lodged, frugally fed.

But what shall we say of His abasement in His Passion? Has ever man been so despised, so outraged, so persecuted? Let us consider His countenance; that divine Face which the Angels longed to behold, has become the seat of affronts; His eyes bandaged, His cheeks livid with blows, His head crowned with thorns; see how in derision they put a reed in His holy Hands, robe Him in purple as a mock king, and in white as a fool; see the abominable murderers bend the knee before Him, salute Him king to insult Him in this dreadful state, spit on His Face, strike His head with the reed they had put in His hand! Can any humiliation, I will not say surpass or equal this, but even approach it? *I am a worm and no man*, He says, *the reproach of men and the outcast of the people.* Hence St. Paul called humility the virtue peculir to Jesus Christ, for, as St. Leo says: "He has, from the womb of His Mother to His last sigh on the Cross, embraced and taught, as far as He could, the most sincere and voluntary humility."

And St. Austin says: "My brethren, when I name Jesus Christ, I represent to you the living and animated humility which ought to be our model, the model of all true Christians."

II. Thus has Our Lord, God and Man, practised humility, this is the example He has left us, and which He wills us to follow; for, as St. Austin says: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, God and Man, is for us an excellent model of the humility we ought to practise;" He has practised the most heroic acts of this virtue to heal by so powerful a remedy the frightful tumor of our pride. Oh, how great is the misery of the proud man! but it is a mercy still greater than this misery, to see a God humbled and abased. *Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart. Learn of Me*, not to make heaven and earth, not to work on nothingness and draw from it visible and invisible things, to resuscitate the dead, to operate other wonderful works,

but, *as I am meek and humble of heart,* be meek and humble after My example.

St. Bernard, on this text, writes these beautiful words : " Jesus Christ, the author and source of virtue, *in whom are contained all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge, in whom* dwelleth the Divinity *corporally,* though adorned with all virtues, seems to take a particular complacency in His humility as the virtue most dear to Him, and which He regards as including His whole doctrine and all His virtues. He does not say ; Learn of Me, who am chaste, prudent, etc., but *who am meek and humble of heart. Learn of Me,* says He, I send you not to study the doctrine of the Patriarchs, to pore over the books of the Prophets, but I give you Myself, as the form and example of humility. The angel and the first woman envied the greatness I possessed before My Father ; the one desired My power, the other My knowledge, but do you excite in your hearts more elevated desires, wish for gifts more useful for you, *Learn of Me, who am meek and humble of heart.* Follow the example I have given you.

Now the example of Jesus Christ ought to be most powerful to move us to embrace most ardently the practise of humility ; for as St. Austin says, who can heal pride if it will not be cured by the humility of the Son of God? What more detestable, exclaims St. Bernard, and what more worthy of chastisement, than to seek earthly glory in sight of the abasement of the Son of God ? Can anything be more disgusting than to see misery puffed up, a worm striving to elevate itself when majesty is annihilated, when the Lord is made a slave ? Oh, humility ! virtue of Jesus Christ, with what confusion dost Thou cover our pride and vanity !

Examples make great impression on our minds, especially when given by illustrious personages. When the great Constantine, eight days after his Baptism, took a

spade to dig out the foundation of St. Peter's Church; when he carried on his shoulders, accustomed to bear the imperial purple, twelve hods of earth in honor of the twelve Apostles, could any of his courtiers find it difficult to imitate his example? The Emperor Heraclius, while wearing his crown and his imperial robes, could not carry the wood of the holy Cross to Calvary; he was obliged to put off his ornaments, to wear coarse garments and go barefoot: and would any of his suite be ashamed to do the same after such an example? If we saw the king performing ordinary actions, we should not regard it as unfashionable to do the same; on the contrary we would imitate him; and a man would deserve censure should he think himself above doing what his sovereign does. Far greater reason have we to do common things, since they are not so far above our condition as above his, he being the first man in his kingdom. Besides, when the sovereign does an ordinary action, he renders it honorable and neutralizes in it what was vile; by wearing a poor garment he renders it precious, his touch ennobles it. Thus the Saints sanctify the clothing that covers them, imprinting thereon a particular virtue, so that we regard it as a relic, preserve it with honor and kiss it with respect; the sun illumines everything his rays touch, even mud; so kings ennoble common things and Saints sanctify them.

III. Applying this to Our Lord, ought we not be without comparison, more eager to imitate Him; for since we know that He is the King of Kings, that the greatest monarchs of the earth are before Him but as atoms, He undoubtedly ennobles by His touch and use the vilest things, He exalts the most abject things and renders glorious that which men judged contemptible. Though there be an immense distance between His greatness and our misery, by descending to our nothingness He has taught us to abase ourselves, we who are so near nothingness, and He

has removed by His example all fear we could have of humbling ourselves. The rich must not dispise the humility of Jesus Christ, says St. Leo, neither must the noble be ashamed of it, for the higest dignity on earth need not blush at what a God did not judge unworthy of His infinite Majesty. When St. Peter made a difficulty of eating the animals presented to him, because he judged them unclean, a voice said to him: Call not that unclean which God hath cleansed;[1] so we cannot call vile the humiliations Our Lord has honored, we cannot regard as opprobrious what He has honored in His own Person; the Cross and its accompaniments are no longer infamous, since He carried them—we glory in forming the cross on our foreheads, and monarchs bear it in their crowns. Saints and true Christians have always shown by the acts of humility they practised with such eagerness, that their soul was enlightened with these divine lights, and replenished with these sentiments. That illustrious martyr of Jesus Christ, Sir Thomas More, in the time of his highest repute, daily served Mass as a young clerk, sang in the choir with the clergy, wore a surplice and carried the cross before the others at processions. Worldlings of low views and narrow capacities did not admire this great virtue; they attributed these actions, in a man of his rank, to simplicity and weakness; but we ought to think that so distinguished a personage, endowed with such a high order of intellect, so rare a prudence, so excellent a judgment as the Chancellor of England, the oracle of his age, saw in these actions a light hidden from ordinary eyes; nor would he have ever practised them, had he not seen them surrounded with glory and gorgeous majesty. We may say as much of the learned St. Paulinus, who, after being a great lord and consul of Rome, became a gardener; of St. Alexander, a celebrated philosopher among the pagans, who, having

[1] Acts. x. 15.

become a Christian, ranged himself among the charcoal burners of Pontus, from whose midst St. Gregory Thaumaturgus afterwards drew him to make him Bishop. Let us finish by the example of Prince Carloman, son of Charles Martel and uncle of Charlemagne, who, after having quitted Austrasia, Thuringia and Germany, and given up even the son God had given him, retired to Rome where he became a Religious, and led a most holy life in a beautiful monastery he had built in honor of St. Sylvester. But to avoid the honors paid him at Rome, especially by Frenchmen, he fled to Mount Cassino, where he was employed first in keeping the flocks of the monastery, and afterwards in cultivating a little garden, and finally in waiting on the cook who, being very passionate, often abused him and sometimes beat him severely, yet the prince never said a word in self justification. Certainly, these were great humiliations for a person of such eminent rank. But let us say once more that humiliations are no longer such; since Our Lord has chosen them, they are glorious and honorable to us, His followers.

IV. Divine love should excite us to humility. Charity is not puffed up; *charity is not ambitious*,[1] says St. Paul; on the contrary, it is humble; nothing is more capable of rendering a soul little in its own eyes than love. It belongs to fire to reduce to ashes the highest cedars: the wind breaks them, iron cuts them, but nothing can reduce and change them like fire. All virtues can serve to make a soul humble, but only the fire of perfect love can reduce it to the dust of humility, and annihilate it; an inflamed soul can never be proud: 1st, because she knows she will incur the enmity of the Lord she loves if she yield to pride; 2nd, that she outrages this divine Saviour, if she attribute to herself the gifts she receives of His pure liberality, or refers to herself the honor of them; 3rd, even

[1] I Cor. xiii. 5.

though this were not so, love would excite her to refer to Him all the honor and glory of His gifts, because it is the nature of love to render the lover liberal, to excite her to strip herself of all she has that she may bestow it on her beloved. Besides, the soul in acting thus knows that she does a thing very pleasing to Our Lord, by giving Him what He most desires. 4th. Because the soul desires as much as possible to render herself like to Jesus Christ, the model of humility; she wishes to abase herself with Him, to annihilate herself by His example, because she knows that resemblance is the cause and effect of true love. And since Our Lord humbled Himself so much here below, it were not fitting that the loving soul should be proud and vain-glorious: a wise spouse will not array herself pompously, when her husband is poorly and meanly clothed.

To conclude, we say that if Christians in general ought to apply carefully to the practice of humility, and be on their guard against pride, those who make particular profession of loving Our Lord ought to be still more eager to practise it. Pirates attack vessels which they know to be charged with precious merchandise, so the demons have their eyes fixed on loving souls, eager for an opportunity to despoil them of their riches. We ought to render useful to ourselves the testimony a devil gave by the mouth of a person possessed: being asked whether there were in hell any people who had felt much love for God during this life, he made this remarkable reply: "We have some, but very few: such people are gained not by surprise, but by a secret vanity which blinds them, and gliding into their hearts, inclines them to despise others; we never fail to attack at the hour of death great friends of God, with a view to make them fall if we can into this vanity and self-love."

HISTORY OF BLESSED MARGARET MARY, AND OF THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS. By Rev. Father DANIEL, S. J. Translated by a Member of the Order of Mary. 1 vol., 12mo.

From the Missouri Republican.

This is a most interesting biography of a Religious of the Visitation of St. Mary. It possesses all the interest of a story, and, in fact, deals in materials gleaned from ths records of convents and monasteries, as novel to the general reader as the incidents of any work of fiction. There is a simplicity, earnestness and deep religious fervor in the work which cannot fail to arrest the attention and gain the sympathy of every one who peruses its pages. It is a volume of over 500 pages, handsomely bound in library style. It has been translated by the authoress of "The Life of Catharine McAuley."

From the Freeman's Journal.

This is another of the volumes of real merit that Mr. O'Shea has been adding to Catholic literature in the English language. It is a very edifying life of a great and remarkable saint of God, who lived and wrote in the seventeenth century.

From the Messenger of the Sacred Heart.

This is a book of absorbing interest. Blessed Margaret Mary—the Devotion to the Sacred Heart—the distinguished ability of the learned author, and of the accomplished translator—all combine to make this a work of the highest merit.

From the Catholic World.

The history before us tells admirably the story of the Life of Blessed Margaret Mary. It is an agreeable narrative, full of edification, of pleasant anecdotes, and interesting details. * * * Whoever calls attention to the life and deeds of a Christian hero does a positive good to humanity. That was a good answer of the Holy Father: "I am complained of," said he, "for canonizing so many saints; but it is a fault I cannot promise to amend. Have we not more need than ever of intercessors in Heaven, and of models of religious virtue in the world?" This is a good book; it is written on a good subject, and will do good; and as such our thanks are due to both translator and publisher, whose efforts toward the formation of Catholic literature and the fostering of Catholic piety in the reproduction of works like the present, will not fail of earning a higher reward than any amount of commendation on our part is worth.

From the Tipperary Free Press.

The life of Blessed Margaret Mary, so ably written by Rev. Father Daniel, of the Society of Jesus, is a most excellent work, treating powerfully of the many virtues of that great saint and her extraordinary devotion to the Sacred Heart. This book is an invaluable treasure. Every page of it points out to the reader the way by which that devotion can be practiced, and will be found worthy the careful

perusal of these pious souls, whose earnest wish is to become ardent lovers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The learned translator has done the work ample justice, by the fluent and perfect manner in which she has reproduced it. In her Introduction she writes some most interesting passages about the different churches and places in which this beautiful devotion is observed. (See the graceful allusion to the old chapel of this town.) * * * This delightful book is elegantly bound in green and gold, with the inscription on the cover, "Blessed Margaret Mary," surmounted by an emblem of the Sacred Heart crowned with thorns, and headed by that potent symbol of our Faith, the Cross. The type is clear and distinct. On the whole, this earnest and soul-inspiring work will render to the reader an accurate and faithful account of this heavenly devotion, and plant in the hearts of true Christians a still more lively and tender love for the Ever Adorable Heart of Jesus.

From the St. Louis Guardian.

A work of great merit and interest, elegantly rendered into English by the amiable and gifted authoress of "The Life of Madame McAuley."

From the Baltimore Mirror.

We have not as yet been able to give this precious work the careful perusal it claims, and even if we had, we are conscious of our inability to do it the justice it deserves. Besides the brilliancy with which the biographer has decked his deserving subject, he entertains and enlightens us with pleasing details of the old French convents. The eloquent Introduction, which is written by the translator, acquires a particular interest from the fact that it contains a charming sketch of the pious labors of Miss Nano Nagle, the Apostle of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Ireland.

HAPPY HOURS OF CHILDHOOD: A Series of Tales for the Little Ones. By the Authoress of the Life of Catharine McAuley, etc. 1 vol. 16mo., square.

We call the attention of our young friends to these charming stories. They are all admirable, as is everything that issues from the flowing pen of Madame McAuley's biographer. "Little Mary and the Angels" is a gem. No man will or can read it without becoming better and purer. May God forever bless the gifted being who conceives such sublimities, and clothes them for our little ones in such simple and graceful language.—*Guardian.*

The children will eagerly welcome these "Happy Hours," and read the Tales with absorbing interest.—*Ave Maria.*

From the St. Louis Guardian.

Happy Hours of Childhood! What recollections, regrets, and reminiscences does not the very title of this admirable little book recall! To assure our readers that the volume before us is well written, and full of edifying matter, we need but say that it is from the pen of the amiable and accomplished Authoress of "The Life of Catharine McAuley." * * * * * * *

The care of the young is a part of our life-labor; a troublesome

task it may be, but ever one of love. What should a book for the young be? What kind of matter should it contain? How should it be written? These questions the Authoress indirectly answers, by the statement of difficulties made in her modest preface:

"I regard it," says she, "as among the most difficult departments of literature, to write for the little ones. To do it well, one would require not only a certain amount of literary ability, but also something of the sublimity of a true poet, the tenderness of a mother, the holiness of a saint, the sweetness of an angel, the power attributed to good fairies, and a share in that childlike simplicity which results from long and loving intercourse with the dear 'innocents.'"

Spiritual teachings, presented in a manner that fascinates, and supplying that which, in their tender years and undeveloped thoughts, children are capable of comprehending: such precisely are the demands made on the writer of a child's book. Faber possessed them, wrote, and succeeded. Our authoress has tried, and she has not failed. There is in her "Angel Dream" a something to which the hearts of others than the pure little ones of children will respond, though theirs will surely go *pit-a-pat* all the while they read. The three other stories are not inferior to the first. * * * * *

No objection can be made to beauty, or even to elevation, of style, in books intended for the young. Whatever is meant for them should be not only sweetly but correctly written. Thus is their taste formed. * * * We have, in truth, in these little stories, what we might fairly expect from one trained to religious thought, experienced in teaching the young, filled with Catholic feelings, and, not the least, bearing from a home beyond the waves memories fair as its sunrises, and as greenly fresh as its beautiful fields. How could such a one fail while writing on such subjects, and for such a purpose as that proposed? This little volume is a decided success; let it be quickly followed by others from the same pen. Meanwhile, let parents use the one given; their children will learn from it; perhaps they themselves may find something therein which will suggest a treatment of their tender trust far different from the modes so frequently and so disastrously used.

From the Metropolitan Record.

HAPPY HOURS OF CHILDHOOD.—Here we have a collection of tender, simple little stories, admirably suited to touch the heart and captivate the fancy of the little ones for whom they were written.

From the Baltimore Mirror.

This edifying, entertaining, and useful little book makes it appearance in the very nick of time. It will make an excellent Christmas gift, and will be sure to amuse as well as instruct the juveniles.

From the Catholic World.

Among the many books for children which the approach of the holidays yields, we accord the first rank to these charming tales, which "combine," to quote the authoress's own ideal of a really good juvenile, "all the fascinations of a lovely fairy tale with the highest spiritual teachings of which childhood is capable." We hope the

will soon repeat this, her most happy experiment in childish literature.

THE KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. By Rev. Father Saint-Jure, S.J. New York : P. O'Shea, No. 27 Barclay street. 1868.

From the Catholic World.

Saint-Jure was one of the best spiritual writers in France of the early part of the Seventeenth Century, and this is one of the best of his books. It is full of solid thought and learning, as well as of the purest and warmest piety. It cannot, therefore, be too highly recommended as a book for spiritual reading, well adapted to the wants of the most intelligent and highly-educated persons, and approved by the judgmen' of the most enlightened men in the Church for two centuries. The translation was made by the accomplished authoress of the "Life of Catharine McAuley," and the publisher has issued it in a very good style.

"A noble effusion of the sublimest piety."—Charles Butler.

This book is particularly esteemed. The author being naturally prolific, and accustomed to meditate deeply on whatever pertains to the spiritual life, has, in some manner, exhausted his subject, yet he never fatigues his readers. He has included in his work the whole economy of religion, and enlarged on all that is important in the doctrines and practices of Christianity.—Feller (*Biographie Universelle.*

From the Catholic Telegraph.

We congratulate Mr. O'Shea on bringing out so many standard works. The Knowledge and Love of Jesus Christ is a masterly work whose merits we can not possibly overrate.

O'Shea's Cheap and Elegant Editions

OF

THE HOLY BIBLE.

At prices varying from $1.50 to $50 per copy.

SMALL AND BEAUTIFUL EDITION, 12MO,

With parallel references, and handsomely illustrated. Published with the approbation of the Most Rev. J. McCloskey, D.D., Archbishop of New York.

No. 1.	Neat roan binding, sprinkled edges	$1 50
2.	" " " gilt edges	2 50
3.	" " " " and clasp	3 00
4.	" Imitation morocco, gilt sides and edges	3 50
5.	" " " " " and clasp	4 00
6.	" Turkey " extra	5 00
7.	" " " " and clasp	6 00
8	" " " rims and clasp	7 50

Grand Pictorial Quarto and Folio Editions

OF

THE HOLY BIBLE.

CONTAINING NEARLY 300 ILLUSTRATIONS. Printed from large and beautiful type, with the approbation of His Grace, the Most Rev. J. McCloskey, D.D., Archbishop of New York.

EXTREMELY CHEAP EDITION.

Imperial 4to, nearly 300 illustrations.

No. 1.	Good stout leather binding	$4 00
2.	Imitation morocco, marbled edges	5 00

No. 3. Imitation morocco, gilt edges..... $6 00
4. Morocco extra..... 8 50
5. " " and clasps..... 10 50
6. " beveled..... 10 50
7. " " and clasps..... 13 00
8. " paneled..... 14 00
9. " " and clasps..... 17 00

SUPERFINE EDITION PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED.

10. Imperial 4to, imitation morocco, marbled edges.....$10 00
11. " " " gilt " 12 00
12. " morocco extra..... 14 00
13. " " " and clasps..... 16 50
14. " " beveled..... 16 00
15. " " " and clasps..... 18 75
16. " " paneled..... 22 50
17. " " " and clasps..... 26 00
18. " " " bands and clasps..... 30 00

MAGNIFICENT FOLIO EDITION.

19. Imitation morocco, marbled edges.....$16 00
20. " " gilt edges..... 18 00
21. Morocco, extra..... 20 00
22. " " and clasps..... 24 00
23. " beveled..... 22 00
24. " " and clasps..... 26 00
25. " paneled..... 25 00
26. " " and clasps..... 30 00
27. " ornamented with tooled edges, rims and clasps..... 40 00
28. Velvet, and ornaments..... 50 00

P. O'SHEA'S NEW PUBLICATIONS

THE MOST SPLENDID AND USEFUL WORK EVER ISSUED FROM THE CATHOLIC PRESS IN AMERICA.

The General History of the Catholic Church,

From the commencement of the Christian era until the present time. By M. L'Abbé J. E. DARRAS, with introduction and notes by the Most Rev. M. J. SPALDING, D. D., Archbishop of Baltimore.

4 vols.	8vo,	cloth,	beautifully illustrated.....	$12 00
"	"	"	beveled edges.....	14 00
"	"	"	sheep, marbled edges.....	16 00
"	"	"	half Morocco extra.....	20 00
"	"	"	half Morocco antique.....	24 00
"	"	"	" calf, gilt backs, extra.....	24 00
"	"	"	Turkey Morocco, extra gilt edges.	32 00

This great work, warmly commended by His Holiness Pope PIUS IX., by the most celebrated Archbishops and Bishops of France and Italy, by the Most Rev. Archbishop SPALDING, of Baltimore, the Most Rev. Archbishop MCCLOSKEY, of New York, the Most Rev. Archbishop PURCELL, of Cincinnati, the Most Rev. Archbishop ALEMANY, of San Francisco, and by nearly all the Bishops of the United States, has been published in a style of unsurpassed elegance.

It has been introduced as a TEXT BOOK in the most distinguished Catholic seminaries and colleges in Europe.

It is recommended by the Most Rev. Archbishop SPALDING to every Catholic family in the United States, "AND TO OUR NUMEROUS SEMINARIES, COLLEGES, AND ACADEMIES."

RECOMMENDATIONS

OF

THE GENERAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

Letter from His Holiness Pope Pius IX. to the author of "The General History of the Church."

Dilecto filio presbytero J. E. Darras, Lutetiam Parisiorum

PIUS P. P. IX.

Dilecte Fili, Salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem:

Litteræ Tuæ XIII. Kalendas Aprilis proximi ad nos datæ, quibus exemplar offerre nobis voluisti operis de historiâ Ecclesiæ generali, fuerunt nobis ipsis quam gratissimæ. Significas enim id Tibi fuisse consilii, quod virum certe decet germanæ doctrinæ studio ac singularis erga Nos ipsos sedemque Apostolicam devotionis et observantiæ laude præstantem. Si, ut confidimus, consilio ipsi opus quod adhuc legere Nos non potuimus, exacte respondeat, magno illud usui erit istic futurum addetque omnibus stimulos ad gravissimam eam ecclesiasticorum studiorum partem pœnitius internoscendam. Meritas pro oblato ipso operis munere cum Tibi, Dilecte Fili, persolvimus gratias, omnipotentem Dominum suppliciter

To our beloved Son, J. E. Darras, Priest at Paris

PIUS P. P. IX.

Beloved Son, health and the Apostolic Benediction:

Your letter of the twentieth of March, accompanied by a copy of your General History of the Church, was most grateful to us. The plan of your work testifies your zeal for sound doctrine and your singular and praiseworthy devotion toward us and the Apostolic See. If, as we trust, the work (which we ourselves have not as yet been able to read) fulfills the design proposed, it will be of the greatest use, and will tend to stimulate a more profound study of this most important branch of Ecclesiastical Science. We give you, therefore, beloved son, merited thanks for your offering to us, and we earnestly pray Almighty God that He will multiply and preserve His gifts in you. And as a pledge of this great favor, we

241.1
Sa23
SAINT-JURE

44136

AUTHOR
Treatise..Knowledge & Love of G.L.
Vol.II

TITLE

DATE LOANED	BORROWER'S NAME	ROOM NUMBER
	Bordeaux	
	Healy	
	Brown	FEB 11
	Morlen	

44136

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION LIBRARY
BERKELEY, CA 94709